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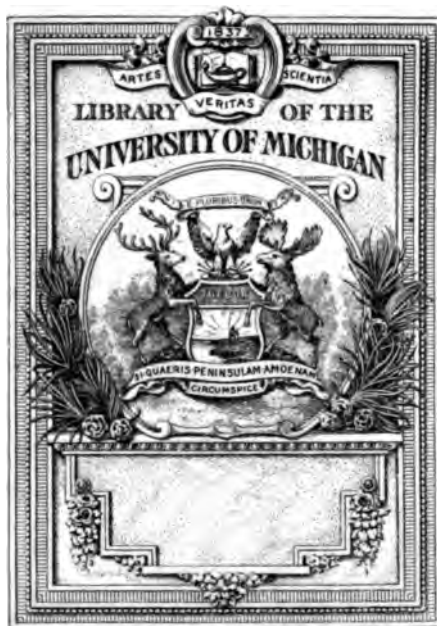
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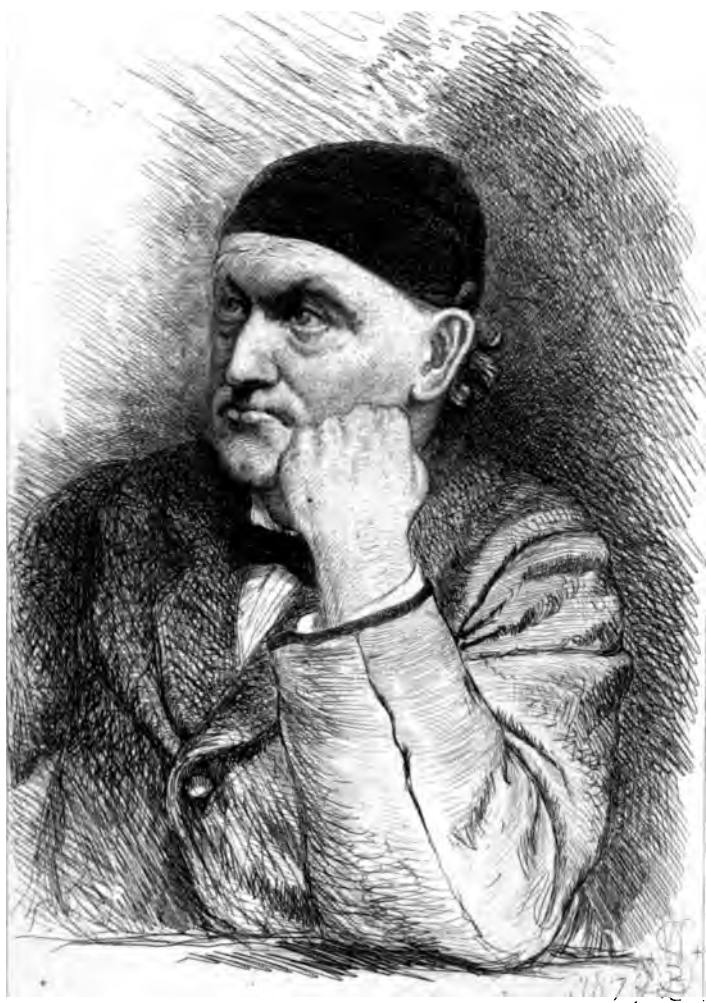
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AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

OF THE LIFE OF

WILLIAM BELL SCOTT

H. R. S. A., LL. D.



William Hall Scott.

Sketched by himself

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

OF THE LIFE OF
WILLIAM BELL SCOTT
H.R.S.A., LL.D.

And Notices of his Artistic and Poetic
Circle of Friends
1830 to 1882 47201

EDITED BY W. MINTO

*Illustrated by Etchings by Himself
and Reproductions of Sketches by Himself and Friends*

VOL. I



NEW YORK
HARPER & BROTHERS, FRANKLIN SQUARE
1892

J

A PREFATORY SONNET

MADAM ROLAND AT THE FOOT OF THE SCAFFOLD

GIVE me a pen, I shall not hold you long,
But I have some few words that I would say
Before I mount, before I pass away,
Following my friends all gone ; it is not wrong
That I would write, nor any foolish song,
But now I stand beside the shoreless sea,
A word or two from out my heart may flee
Not said before, that coming Death makes strong.

How many have felt thus besides the brave,
Fair Queen of womankind, the good Roland !
Life's long years past, both joyous years and grave,
The wish descends upon the untired hand
To leave some self-drawn picture with some stave
Of speech for those left waiting on the strand.

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PROLOGUE

AT various periods of life I have tried to make a written record of my own experiences, especially those of childhood, with occasional notes on the doings of others with whom I have come in contact : the scenery of my own journey, in short—waifs and strays, the finger-posts and milestones of the time past. I have even tried to make a connected history of the externals of my own career, interesting to myself, and without the idea of its interesting any one else. But the difficulty in separating the really important from the merely apparently important has always precipitately brought my efforts to an end. I now come to the conclusion that a very great number of men and women do this, even at an age when they, properly speaking, only begin to live : by and by they look at their diaries and other more ambitious documents and find them so worthless, they are equally astonished at the literary attempts they made, and at the things recorded. When our course is first visibly settled by profession and marriage, we jump to a conclusion that all is over, that the delusions of life can be looked back upon,

and we innocently fly to *the pleasures of memory*, like Samuel Rogers at twenty-nine.

These attempts on my part have had a self-educational excuse. I have thought to understand myself better by their means. But it has not been so; the difficulty of looking upon oneself from an outer standpoint is too great. It is not impossible to do so; but if we could "see ourselves as others see us," the poetical interest at least is gone, the record is worthless. It is no more a true picture of what we saw, felt, enjoyed, or suffered, but of mistakes and reasons—the dead elements of the scene. The result is a *caput mortuum*. I come to the conviction that autobiographic writings may be instructive to others; not to the writers. The best excuse for them is to be found in the pleasure they may afford, the luxury of again experiencing early emotions and scenes, however faintly, and communicating them to the friendly and sympathetic.

When we attain to what may be called old age, about seventy or so, this pleasure is, I think, feebler than at an earlier age; still, with a little time at command and a lifelong habit of occupying myself with something in the shape of work, I shall try again, mainly because I have beside me a volume of 400 folio pages or more, written twenty-five years ago, when I was unable to see what was fit and what was unfit for possible preservation. This I now conclude must be destroyed; but before it disappears in the roaring flames of the great chimney in this "Old Scotch House" which I have endeavoured to

celebrate in my poems, I must make some selections, thus availing myself of the distincter memory of middle life. Perhaps it is not worth while to do even this. I am writing in 1877. The big book was finished in May 1854. Still I shall try again. To destroy it altogether would be like consigning some part of myself to a premature grave. Yet I must destroy it; and on coming down beyond its date I shall preserve some records of my friends—of those of them at least more interesting than myself.

The truth was, I thought myself an old man at forty, as some few do; not the lucky dogs who get all their deserts and something more. For myself, I wanted external qualifications for being lucky: introspection was my pleasure and my curse; action was hated by me; I was an absentee, a somnambule, and gave myself much to subjects no one else cared for. I had thus a private interest apart from success, and was indeed possessed of a mystery, as it were. This was my state of mind for a great period of early middle life, although oddly enough I received a creditable amount of consideration as a sensible fellow in common affairs! Untiring industry I certainly had; what my hand found to do I did with all my might—might of hand, not of mind, and mainly to meet the necessities of the hour. That accomplished, I fell back upon my secret speculations in an ocean of regrets and tobacco smoke; and on my poetry, which shared in all the peculiarities of my nature. At last, after the removal by deaths and

otherwise of some oppressive loads, I woke up, returned home to myself, threw off much, as a dog shakes itself on coming out of water, and began to breathe more freely. Reading my own old letters (I found all my old home letters when my brother David and my mother died), as well as re-perusing much of this old folio book, has affected me as if I must have had *a double*: a creature personating me, whose writing these documents were—so much do we change with the changing years.

I make these remarks by way of introduction. If I manage to carry out the sketch so that it is worthy of preservation, there will be little of the subjective, little introspection, not much allusion to the pains and penalties of over-sensibility and other constitutional weaknesses; the intense self-consciousness that makes me dwell upon myself shall never be directly mentioned if I can help it. Reading over again these old papers has frightened me out of revelations and making confessionals of notebooks. To write one's mental history is too difficult as well as too dreadful. No trustee or executor would like to preserve them. The motives, passions, and speculations of the transitional periods of boy and man, however important in physical, moral, or mental progression, were only transitional, and are better forgotten. We live surrounded by so many social conventions, we go about with so many deceptive coverings, that a sincere attempt at self-portraiture in writing is like walking into the street naked, and is only likely to frighten our neighbours. The devil,

lying perdu within each of us, is a bond of brotherhood ; he is the touch of nature that makes the whole world kin ! But happily we try to ignore him even to ourselves ; if we do so for a few thousand years we may at the end forget him altogether.

The poet draws his own portrait in another way and succeeds better, idealising himself. Tears and the beauty of art sanctify and elevate ; the plain prose narrative cannot do so without intensified colour and varnish—rhetoric, in short.

All that I propose, then, in these pages, is to describe with some degree of accuracy some of the scenery of my life, and of the lives of my dear and intimate friends. And to do so as an artist should who has his model before him, I must premise that I shall endeavour to present realities, not merely appearances. What degree of truth there may be found on the canvas must be the measure of its value. I propose none other. I leave elocution to those who like it ; to me it seems too closely allied to vacuity and deception.

CHAPTER I

THE HOUSE IN WHICH I WAS BORN

THE house in which the writer was born on the 12th of September 1811—for many years to him the navel or centre of creation, the point whence radiated the remainder of the known world, including the city of Edinburgh on one side and Arthur's Seat on the other—was a small rubble-stone mansion standing within its own narrow piece of ground at St. Leonard's, close to the old town of Edinburgh. It was in the immediate neighbourhood of the scenery of the *Heart of Midlothian*; Dumbiedykes, and Davie Deans's cottage, so called, being familiar realities to me before I had heard of the novel or its author. From the little window of the coom-ceiled top bedroom appropriated to the boys there was but one house visible between us and the ranges of Salisbury Crag, over which again rose Arthur's Seat. This outlook was a source of endless delight to us, especially in winter, when the first snow was hailed in the early morning, and when we used to see the skaters winding their way past this solitary

house,¹ over the stile at Davie Deans's cottage, and along the King's Park towards Duddingston Loch.

Other rooms in this top story of the little house were full of mysterious interest to us children. That at the opposite end of the landing was a lumber-room, in which was an ancestral spinning-wheel with the lint still round the distaff. Behind it hung several military red coats, my father having been in the regiment of fencibles and an uncle also. This uncle was the wild one of the family, who got transferred into the regulars as an ensign, and shortly after died in some violent manner never explained to us. Besides, there was my grandfather's cutlass and belt, or what was traditionally so called, he having been a supervisor of excise: a very badly-paid one, I fear, in a troublesome time. There were also sword-sticks more than one associated with his name; but to believe his portrait,—a very good pencil drawing I still preserve,—he must have been the mildest as well as the feeblest of old men. A third apartment was very small and dark, the aperture for light having been shut up in the days of the window-tax. This was the library, to be mentioned again, as will also be the remaining fourth apartment, which was an old uncle's exclusive property.

As the boy grew up to recognise this house as if it were as much a part of the family as any of its living inhabitants, I must describe it equally

¹ Gibraltar House, it was called, having been built just at the time that rocky watchman of the Mediterranean fell into English hands.

with them. Every stone and step and window had its friendly look of recognition, every apple tree and elder bush. Even those that were dead were allowed to decay where they stood, my father never taking any interest in anything but business, religion, and the state of his pulse.

The public highway, which latterly became a street, was separated from the house by a high stone wall in which was a green door of upright planks opened by an iron latch. This gave the visitor access to a short path paved with pebbles and fenced by a hedge of holly and elder, rising into an arch over the low wicket leading into the garden exactly in front of the house-door, which was approached by five steps. These steps gradually splayed out, the lower one at each end terminating in a great curve supporting the heavy hand-rail. Over the holly hedge here and there—the whole length of it was not above forty yards—the bushes had been trained up and clipped into shapes, cones and umbrella shapes, once no doubt neat and trim, but in my day rapidly regaining the freedom of nature. At the farther end of the pebbled pathway was a courtyard, with pigeon-house, the watch-dog's kennel, a great water-butt, in which my jackdaw—my first and dearest friend, who knew well the time of my daily return from the High School—accidentally drowned himself, and a way round the house to a wide grass yard with stable and byre, having a pump-well with large stone trough in the centre.

The daily visitors to this little old house were few and regular, the baker being the principal among them. He carried a load of loaves on his head that caused him to stoop on entering the green door from the road, and from his wrist dangled a bundle of wooden tallies, notched down the edges with the number of loaves he had left on the previous days of the week. But sometimes in the winter nights a sturdy beggar found his way within the precincts, and sat down resolutely on the steps of the door till served to his contentment and desire. The guisards also about the New Year's time visited us: a company of half a dozen or eight absurdly-habited boys in masks and carrying lanterns, singing a rhyme beginning—

Redd up, redd up all your stools,
For here we come, a pack of fools!

Let me lovingly describe the house-door and then enter. The door itself was immensely thick and heavy, formed with a great many narrow tall panels and styles, with a projecting splash-board at the base to carry the rain over the first step; it was framed by immense ogee stone lintels and architrave, over which was a wooden barge-board. This architrave was surmounted by a stone tablet bearing a crest: a demi-eagle issuing from a crown with initials and the date 1734. The door had no lock; it opened by a great well-worn latch, the click of which was unlike every other possible sound, and never to be forgotten. This sound, it is scarcely an

exaggeration to say, I have not only never forgotten, although sounds are impossible to describe, but I have heard it mentally every day of my life up to the present, and often I have heard it in my sleep, and have started up broad awake in a moment. Within, the door was fastened by several bolts; and after a panic caused by what were called the Marr and Williamson murders, a series of unelucidated crimes that happened in London about 1819 or 1820, a chain of ample proportions was added. This was often raised even in day-time, especially during the *Radical* times, when the distress in the weaving trades was so great as to suggest the surreptitious manufacture of people's pikes, and many hundreds of Glasgow and Paisley operatives were offered work by the Town Council of Edinburgh in making a road round Salisbury Cliff, long afterwards, perhaps still, called the "Radical Road." The small square hall and staircase were panelled, and all except the heavy mahogany banisters was painted white, as was the dining-room. This, and the two bedrooms above, were the only panelled rooms in the house. I am persuaded that the room on the other hand from the hall had originally been the kitchen, though it was now the parlour or waiting-room, as a deforming arrangement had evidently been lately made to afford a descent to the region below, where a new kitchen had been formed.¹ The other rooms

¹ The development of convenience and luxury in domestic architecture has been prodigious of late times in Scotland; up to

were neither lined with wood nor lathed ; they were simply plastered against the stone of the walls and washed with stiff tempera of light faint colours.

This general unadorned lightness and whiteness was one of the many peculiarities that seemed to separate us from the rest of the world. Our mother, indeed, often remarked that she was ashamed of the old fashions of the place, but this feeling was far from being responded to by us children. On the contrary, a feeling of superiority prevailed in the household. An arcane sense of unlikeness, a sort of right of exclusiveness, as that of a chosen people, took possession of the growing boys, as if they were born to some inheritance of genius or Heaven knows what.

One of the other circumstances that conduced to this result was the amount of influence that poetical or artistic ideas soon possessed for us, especially such as were derived from illustrated books and engravings generally. Our home education was curiously facilitated by a quantity of prints, collected by the father during many years, or disgorged by his capacious pockets nearly daily on

the end of the sixteen hundreds, the most important country houses and defensible mansions were thatched, and even the majority of parish churches. The provision of a drawing-room in middle-class country houses was scarcely thought of till the end of last century.

Layers of white oil-paint, repeated from time to time till the sharpness of the mouldings was gone, was the prevailing treatment when interiors were still lined with wood, latterly only fir or ash, not wainscot. While oak was the wood used, no painting whatever was applied ; when it was given up for the cheaper deal, the panelling became very large, and paint was applied ; with the introduction of wall-papers wood disappeared.


his return from his engraving and printing premises in the Parliament Square, which were then in full play as a manufactory of such things, good, bad, or indifferent.

Landscapes these were in good part, as every month my father furnished a print of some castle, gentleman's "seat," or church (ruins or other antiquities were not yet as popular as gentlemen's "seats"), for the *Scots Magazine*, a very superannuated periodical, just then beginning to go down before the quite new literature following the *Edinburgh Review* on the one hand and the *Quarterly* on the other. But illustrated histories and books of travels—Rollin and Niebuhr, Captain Cook and Mungo Park—were all well known to us, and Bible pictures from old or modern English painters still more so. These last were a never-ending staple in this manufactory of humble art, the Scotch being exceedingly fond of splendid Bibles; and publishers of large books issued in successive numbers, carried about by colporteurs, having at that time great success. The exact shape, according to Renaissance art, of all the vessels of Jewish worship was familiar to us from infancy—that is to say, their shape according to Calmet, or, as I have found lately, according to Hans Sebald Beham. In these prints the Levite was always blowing his curved trumpet, and the High Priest wearing his breastplate, his Urim and Thummim; and Noah's Ark was always seen upon the face of the waters in that establishment.

But far more important to us were the portfolios

and books of prints, the illustrated British poets and novelists in my father's collection. Important in two ways. In the first place, it gave a pleasant and unembarrassed acquaintance with poetic themes and things, an æsthetic and really final point of view critically ; and in the second it created a comparative distaste for the grammatical and linguistic, the really correct, acquaintance with poetry and the other subjects treated. In winter evenings our school-books were gladly thrown aside for a united and thoroughly-enjoyed examination of a large number of well-thumbed volumes of illustrations to Bell's and Cook's little editions of English poets and dramatists, Boydell's larger pictures from Shakespeare, and such performances of the generation passing or past.

And this last-mentioned peculiarity of the works in question, that of belonging to the past time, reminds me of another disadvantage in studying them so enthusiastically. Every generation, even every decade of years, has its own artistic configuration, its taste in poetry, its popular motive and form, just the same as it has its fashions—great or small head-dresses, short or long waists ; and these works of the last generation made us unreceptive of the newest, and proud of sympathy with the older, fashions of design and of poetry. There can be no doubt that this connoisseurship, true as well as false, so long as it revelled in the old masters, "their Raphaels, Correggios, and stuff," prevented sympathy with native English art ; and a delight in the immaturity of Mortimer, Louthembourg, and Fuseli, down to



Stothard, Thurston, and Corbould, was dangerous to a proper appreciation of the tendency of art in the year 1830. My elder brother David was certainly deleteriously influenced by studying these able but imperfect artists—geniuses in a way—of the previous generation, and by the allegorical character of their inventions.

The degree of celebrity acquired by my father in landscape, his ability to elaborate the weeds in a foreground or the foliage of a tree in a miniature print, so that any one could say that is a fern or this is an ash, had reached London. A number of these illustrations to Cook's edition of the poets had been sent down to him to etch in the landscape backgrounds. Cook the publisher, or his engravers, used to send the design and the plate to him, and he was willing to give his aid in this way. One of the greater incidents of his life was a visit to London to see these gentlemen, in the time of the war, when the Leith smack in which he made the voyage had its cabin hung round with carbines and cutlasses, for passengers as well as sailors. He had brought back with him sets of the proof impressions, and many other prints and books. Some of these he bound in volumes for the benefit of the apprentices in his atelier, and others were for our amusement at home.

In point of invention these were extremely fanciful. The poet could not use a figure of speech but the artist without scruple seized upon it as a subject. If the poet said—

It seemed that she had stolen all Cupid's shafts,

the painter forthwith represented Cupid sleeping under a tree and a nymph snatching away his quiver. Cupid played a great *rôle* indeed in these pretty little prints, and emblems of all the virtues and vices were freely used.

Cupid claims the dart and quiver,
But 'tis Fancy twangs the bow,

was represented by a large demonstrative emblematic young lady kneeling on a cloud, and the dangerous boy skipping by her side prompting her to shoot, which she does in the most elegant attitude, not the least as if she expected to hit. At that time imitative art competed with poetry, the mistress of all the arts, in dealing with the incorporeal: it was not to be limited by the natural! Now a poet is most probably illustrated by portraits, views of localities mentioned, and other commonplace realities. These old prints were, moreover, enriched above and below with allegorical ornaments of a kind entirely lost sight of in our matter-of-fact day. Over the picture of Eve being presented to Adam was a display of doves, roses, ribbons, and other pretty things; over the other, in which she is represented as presenting the apple to her shrinking husband, Death appears looking down upon them and touching his forehead with his bony finger.

Compared with these and other fanciful book-plates, the large empty designs for Boydell's Shakespeare had no attractions. Even to the youngest of us the ignorance of costume and other historical pro-

perties was apparent, and even dramatically the action and expression of the actors were manifestly untrue. It was entirely different with Sir R. Kerr Porter's Anacreon subjects, or Fuseli's from Milton, into which neither scenery nor costume entered. My admiration of these, and of the antique statues of the Museo Clementino, was unbounded, led on by my elder brother David, to whom the abstract and the heroic were necessary, and whose delight in any picture, poem, or speculation rose in proportion to its distance from the scenes and motives of the present. To all the other three children—the two boys and one girl, the youngest—there was only one set of designs that gave no pleasure. These were Hogarth's, known to us by the reduced set published not long before. The Rake's and Harlot's Progresses, the Stages of Cruelty, and the Election prints—indeed all the works of the artist—filled them with loathing, and made the little sister cry. As for landscapes and books of views, there were none of any attractiveness until Blore the architect, Daniel the sea-painter, and Craig, who executed the Border Antiquities to which Sir Walter Scott wrote the descriptions, appeared,—except one series representing Irish scenery, engraved by an Irishman, Thomas Milton, who had a unique power of distinguishing the foliage of trees and the texture of all bodies, especially running water, as it never had been done before and never will be done again.

My father's speciality was landscape, and these

engravings by Thomas Milton were much admired by him ; but although he had got some notice in his youth from Lord Buchan, the founder of the Scottish Antiquarian Society, and from John Clerk (Lord Eldin), who occasionally contributed a clever drawing for the *Scots Magazine*, he cared little for his own art, and looked upon any one becoming a painter as a man throwing away his chances in life. His desire was to be an extensive manufacturer, a man of business ; so he applied himself to bring up clever assistants, and to extend his printing operations more than to make a character as artist. The great war had but lately ceased, and histories of it were still popular. Illustrations to these were therefore among the miscellaneous matter produced from the pockets of the great brown greatcoat when the tall pater reached home to dinner. Portraits of all sorts of generals, hetmans, marshals, czars, and emperors, especially the Emperor of the French, as Consul, with laurels embroidered on his collar, or as warrior in cocked hat, were familiar to us. But of all the popular heroes, Nelson was a thousand leagues ahead of any other. Every one of his adventures was intimately known to us : how he lost his eye, lost his arm, accepted the Spanish admiral's sword, saw the ship *L'Orient* blow up, and at last how he lay in the arms of Hardy on the quarter-deck, while the marine who shot him was seen in the background, on the enemy's crosstrees, falling back dead with his arms in the air. These were independent engravings, sold as such to an enthusiastic people ;

and another Nelson celebration was a large folio sheet called a "Memorial," exhibiting Britannia weeping over a portrait of Nelson, flanked on either side by mourning sailors, and the Battle of Trafalgar below.

This last was both designed and engraved by John Burnet, a former apprentice, who used to paint in water-colours, design, and engrave, even write doggerel verses below his prints if desired. A multitude of his performances used to lie about, and we all considered him "a genius," the first of that class of superior beings that has haunted me all my life.

This "Memorial" was framed and hung in the dining-room, and had thus become one of the household gods. Trafalgar had taken place before I was born, but Waterloo came later, and I think I can remember the rough clay candlesticks with candles burning in all the windows, although the house was lonely and out of the way, in illumination for the victory. Just at that time, too, the highway was being widened at the expense of a corner-piece of our garden to allow a public well to be built, which erection was identified as to date by a tablet with the word "Waterloo" being cut on the face of it. One of the Scotch regiments that had been at the great battle returned home shortly after the well was finished, and I certainly remember some of us keeping watch to observe if the soldiers noticed the celebration by the name of the well. I could not then be much

more than five, if so much, and it is my earliest recollection of a passing incident. The coloured engraving issued from the paternal manufactory of the celebrated single-handed fight on the field for a regimental standard is also stamped into my memory by having been the central picture in a home imitation of a public exhibition my elder brothers had been taken to see : one of the first of its kind, it must have been, ever held in Edinburgh. David or Robert, I do not know which of these two elder brothers it was, or perhaps it was a united effort of both, screened off a recessed dormer window and charged every one in the family a penny each to get within the screen and see the prints daubed over with colour with which he or they had covered the interior.

My earliest impression from higher, or at least larger, art dates from the year following, and is also related to a national exploit. Algiers was bombarded by Lord Exmouth in August 1816, and we children were taken to see a large moving panorama, diorama it might have been, of the event. The size of the men-of-war-ships impressed the child, and the booming and beating of the cannon—great drums, I should now say—overpowered him. The smoke too was represented, and when the boats filled with huzzaing emancipated English slaves came along, there remained no possible increase to his excitement. Perhaps the earliest observable distinction between children is a nervous one ; that between the sympathetic and the obtuse, between those who are to

suffer and enjoy, and those who are to be passively masters and possessors.

To return to the books of prints; there were some of a character interesting to natives of Edinburgh which I have never since seen. One of these was more literary than artistic, although it was partially illustrated. This was *The Bee*, a miscellany published in Edinburgh apparently in weekly issues, which must have gone on successfully for a period of years, as it extended to some twelve volumes. My father's copy was annotated by the hand of Lord Buchan, one of the original contributors. Besides this, and of like local interest, were the *Tea Table Miscellany*, etc., the original poetical publications of Allan Ramsay and of David Allan, the illustrator of *The Gentle Shepherd*. The copperplates of these admirable designs were indeed among the stock of old engraved plates accumulated by my father's habit of purchasing such things. Also the original edition of Burns, and innumerable volumes of self-taught poets in the Scottish dialect that followed on the successful advent of the master. These were treated by us boys with unbounded contempt, only excepting one which I still remember with respect. This was called *Scotland's Skaith, or Will and Jean*, a story of ruin by drinking, which ought to be republished at this day.

But the most important of all the illustrated books was perhaps *The Grave*, with Blake's inventions admirably engraved by Sciavonetti. (There was also Young's *Night Thoughts*, engraved as well

as designed by Blake himself; but they were so completely inferior that they had no attractions.) The much-maligned Cromek had visited Edinburgh, no doubt at the time he was industriously collecting the Burns and Border scraps of verse he afterwards published, and my father had become one of his original subscribers for *The Grave*. These inventions had impressed the paternal mind in the profoundest way: the breath of the spirit blown through the judgment trump on the title-page seemed to have roused him as well as the skeleton there represented. The parting of soul and body after the latter is laid on the bier; the meeting of a family in heaven—indeed nearly every one of the prints he looked upon as almost sacred, and we all followed him in this, if in little else. Would it not be really thus after death? Would not the emancipated soul look at those remaining behind with new feelings, and hover over the deserted but still beloved body? To these questions we children, very young when the book was published, answered with perfect faith.

Long afterwards in London Dr. Garth Wilkinson introduced me to the *Songs of Innocence* he had just then reprinted: sweetly childlike and erratic fragments, produced at a time when poetry was pitifully artificial. Since that time I have myself assisted in the elevation of Blake, till by too liberal praise he has been, both as poet and painter, as much overestimated as he was formerly neglected. The short life by Allan Cunningham began the revolution, and



the more elaborate celebration by Gilchrist established his sentimental triumph; but little more than a year ago (1876), when the Burlington Club placed their exhibition of his collected works in my hands for arrangement, I was astonished to find how circumscribed was the field occupied by Blake. His earliest and most elaborated pictures were mild and soft like Hamilton or even Westall, and his large attempts, such as the life-size heads of poets, showed a meaningless incapacity. His want of cultivation as a painter was painfully evident, and made his resemblance to the learned Fuseli an unmistakable imitation. To Fuseli, who will some day have a resuscitation, his *style* in art and his passion for Michelangelo were due, and to Swedenborg must we credit the visions that overlaid his intellect. But to his lucid and independent moments we owe some productions that look like inspiration, and while arranging that exhibition I felt this with renewed vigour, and celebrated it by a sonnet.

ON SEEING AGAIN BLAKE'S DESIGNS FOR "THE
GRAVE" AFTER MANY YEARS.

There was a day before the bird could fly,
But still was hid beneath maternal wing,
These things were shown him, and they were a spring
Of living waters; had not God on high
Shown innocent William what it was to die?
Made him to know the raptures of the pain,—
Body, soul, parting, meeting once again,—
Dread truths concealed within futurity.

And now that age hath shriven and tonsured me,
When labouring much in thriftless fields hath filled
The tablets of my memory, these burn
With their old fires ; within them still I see
An Inspiration in art little skilled :
My heart wakes up, my childhood's awes return.

CHAPTER II

THE HOUSEHOLD

I WISH I could indicate in some measure the peculiar character of the members of the household, who seemed to the child indivisibly a part of the domicile itself. To do this as they then appeared to him, ignorant of every other experience, it is in vain to try, simply because the successive slides in the magic lantern of life are removed to make way for the next to come.

Both the parents of the family of four children of which I was the third were rather advanced in middle age; so much so as to appear prodigiously aged to the juvenile apprehension. Not that the dear mother could have touched the *mezzo cammino* when I first remember her, since the youngest child, the "little sister," was only two years younger than myself; but she had left off the style of youth with its ways, wearing a white cap frilled with lace and a shawl even within the house, and from morning to night. These garments, one begins to think, were the fashion of the day, as even in portraits of the early part of the century children with their large

white caps are to be seen. She was short and stout, slow and quiet: we were a second family, and the mother's heart had been buried with the first. It is unnecessary to say over again what has been recorded in the *Memoir* of my brother.¹ Yet it was to me more especially, as I was her favourite I used to think, that the feeling was more particularly apparent. The name she often called me was not William but Lockhart, that having been the name of a favourite now in heaven. With an expression of sadness that puzzled and somewhat humiliated me, she used to correct herself, but I wished I could be Lockhart to her. Her mistake gave me a glimpse into a sort of antediluvian past, a primitive age passed in a Garden of Eden we should try to make her some amends for losing. Once she had been in Paradise when young and happy, before the white rooms of her old-fashioned house had enclosed her.

That period had been before the parental pair had become dissenters, and the misfortune of its ending had perhaps caused the frame of mind that had led to their joining the Baptist body, whose worship was the most unattractive to children. The creed of this limited fraternity was this. Baptism should be administered by immersion as the symbol of Christ's burial and resurrection, and only when the acolyte was grown up and able to make confession of faith. The Sunday service carried on


¹ [It is there recorded (p. 14) that the four eldest sons of the family were cut off in childhood within a few days.—ED.]

within the four whitewashed walls was long and unspeakably uninteresting to the uninitiated, its mysteries utterly reasonable and commonplace. Every Sunday there was a sacrament after public worship: a celebration such as the Lord's Supper may have been—a simple, somewhat awe-inspiring partaking of the bread and wine in remembrance of the body and blood of the one great sacrifice, followed by a “love-feast” or Agape, for all the members who chose to stop the remaining time between services, held in a smaller assembly-room adjoining.

The service itself was democratic in the highest degree, every member having the privilege of “exhorting” the congregation by short addresses conveying the results of study or reading, of experiences or observations. Among the speakers were two able and intelligent, but unaffected and perhaps unlearned men, whose harangues my brothers thought they had weighed and found wanting. Indeed the eldest of the three boys, who early became critical, confided to us younger ones that on week-days they were to be seen behind counters or following ordinary trades, the one being a baker and the other a carpenter. The second boy, the humorist and afterwards the erratic and unmanageable Robert, used to make game of these two, no doubt, more than usually able men, by hiding himself under the book-board and imitating their trades, calling to me in an audible whisper, when any difficulty occurred in the continuity of their discourses, “Ha, the dough won't rise!” or “Oh, the saw has got so blunt!”

The rest of the Sunday was devoted to reading the Bible or minor appropriate books, and answering the questions of the Shorter Catechism. The books I remember were, strangely enough, Blair's *Sermons*, the *Theology* of Timothy Dwight, Hervey's *Meditations*, and even Zimmermann *On Solitude*, scarcely a "religious book" at all. The Shorter Catechism I took to with great love and respect, and it still appears to me the most profound as well as condensed and simple exposition possible of the theology of our religion.

Our father was over six feet in height, thin in face and figure, still older than our mother to me, as I never remember him without spectacles and a brown wig. He was very straight, and spoke with some refinement of pronunciation and selection of words. Long after the rest of the male creation had adopted trousers, he continued knee-breeches and leggings buttoned up the outside of the leg, and never to the end of his life did he abandon the voluminous white neckerchief and projecting frilled shirt requiring the mother's hand to adjust before he left the house. For a long time, too, after the daily visit of the white-aproned barber had been generally dispensed with, that functionary appeared after breakfast and took possession of the fireplace and the person of the master, while the mother washed up the cups with her own careful hands. This sight I seldom saw,—he was dismissed at an early time in my experience,—but the picture of the tall paternal figure stooping to enable the loving hand and



short arm to wind round his neck the mighty cambric envelope, and to spread the great frill which combed out half down the vest, remains in the memory still. Such masculine inaptitudes were not uncommon then, but their effect upon the boy was to give him a certain misgiving as to the cleverness of the larger and stronger creature, a feeling which assorted painfully with the species of fear the paternal voice and step inspired. This fear was of a negative kind, but strong nevertheless. He never expressed to me anything but indifference ; always ill in health, he never took any notice of me, a fact begetting a repellent feeling on my part.

In the long winter evenings, when we were all together, the little sister on a low stool by the mother's chair, who was constantly employed with her needle, the domestic scene was a pleasant one. An uncle, the father's elder brother, became important. He was as unlike his invalid brother as it is possible to imagine. He had always stories to tell about ancestors more or less apocryphal. He could make pop-guns from the stems of the elder-tree, reed whistles, pan-pipes, and many other toys. He took some pains too to keep us right in pronouncing the alphabet, although he only excited our mirth when he went over the letters, giving them the broad old Scotch pronunciation : A was *awe*, B was *bay*, C was *say*, and so on, ending with U sounded like *oo* in good, W as *duploo*, Z as *izzid*. This pronunciation, which is that of Latin in all countries except England, was long before the day we speak of

abandoned in the teaching of English in Edinburgh. Games played with the fingers too he had, a pleasure to him as well as to us, such as "Fly away Jack and fly away Jill," "Come back again Jack, come back again Jill," which the little sister never mastered; and another which began by his holding the child's thumb and saying, "This is the man that broke the barn,"—then taking instead the forefinger, "This is the man that stole the corn,"—then the second finger, "This is the man that ran awa',"—then the third, "This is the man that told a',"—then violently seizing and twisting about the little finger, "And poor pirley-winkie paid for a'!"—a consummation which, however expected, always delighted her.

The country or parish school and its pedagogue a century and a quarter ago was a totally different institution from what it is at present under a brisk inspection. Our amiable little lame uncle still possessed the Bible his game-cock had won at the breaking-up time on the floor of the school. A humble, probably parish, school it must have been, as it was in Musselburgh, a small village, or rather *borough*, regarding which he used to repeat the adage—

Musselboro' was a boro' ere Edinboro' was ane,
And Musselboro' will be a boro' when Edinboro's gane.

When attacked by the disease in the knee that left him lame, he must have been a favoured pupil, for the breaking-up cock-fight was adjourned to the sick boy's chamber to amuse him.

This sport had never appeared to Uncle George to be a cruel one ; he enjoyed it to the end, and every other kind of sport. An outhouse, once a byre, now a kennel, was filled with pointers and setters, and as autumn drew on we were admitted to uncle's room to see his preparation for the moors, and all the assortment of gun and bag, powder and shot, fishing-basket and tackle.

These winter evenings, lighted by candles and warmed by the tiled fireplace, appear in memory to have lasted for ages, like the period of the Plantagenets or Tudors ; yet they must only have continued a very few seasons in perfection. The tiled fireplace—whereon Moses was seen receiving the tables of the law from under a cloud edged like a curly cabbage-leaf, and a traveller in another place, under a broad hat and with a stick in his hand, passing a finger-post on a road, with three bunches of weeds like fans with their handles stuck in the earth adorning the foreground—was for ever hidden by a new grate with polished steel sides that covered everything. On the side of the room opposite the windows there was in the wall a large niche reaching from the dado to the ceiling, newly shelved with ornamentally curved narrow shelves—an adjunct characteristic of the Hogarthian time and the china mania. So, in fact, was it still used—the best tea-set, the bronze urn, and other choice objects being displayed there ; and on the floor of it lay all the little Bibles and hymn-books appropriated to each of us, and books for Sunday reading. This niche too fell under

maternal displeasure as *outré*, so doors were placed upon it. Still the mantelpiece itself could not be removed very easily, and it remained with its numerous little swags of flowers carved in wood along the front, thickly painted white like the rest of the room, and it still supported certain white Dresden or Chelsea figures and some great univalve shells. Besides these fixtures, within reach of the paternal hand lay three books. Two of these I never saw touched; these were the ancestral Bible, with entries of births and deaths back to its own date, about 1700, and a Greek Testament, which had no doubt lain there since the day of conversion to the Baptist persuasion, as I had heard my father give the very words of the original—almost the only words he ever quoted in his own or any other language—describing the baptism of the eunuch, when he went *down into*, and *rose up out of*, the water, asserting at the same time that John should be called “John the Dipper,” as more correct and idiomatic than John the Baptist. The other book was Buchan’s *Domestic Medicine*, and was consulted every day. The interest in baptism had waned, but the other interest in the pulsations of heart and wrist, in the action and feeling of all the anatomy indeed, never decreased till his death. He was a monomaniac about disease.

CHAPTER III

CHILDHOOD

IT appears to me that the earliest remembrances we retain from childhood do not refer to the externals of life, which are altogether apart from the child, and are presented to it in detail recognisably by the senses, but that they relate to the difficulties of consciousness—difficulties which appear very quickly through the mental dawn which takes place sooner than the old people observe. Under this impression I have observed frequently on the faces of very small children wonderful expressions that defy interpretation, expressions which I have thought may have impressed Wordsworth with the doctrine impossible to believe, that “our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting.” It is not the objective world that disturbs the child—*that* stands in the sunlight; it is the subjective, the interior self separate from all that, with the darkness of life. The very same questions are presented to childhood that remain unsolved to the grown-up man, that drive him to some creed or church, and nevertheless remain to him on his deathbed. Instead of the lost and

wandering expression on the eyes of infancy offering evidence that

Trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God who is our home,

as the imaginative piety of Wordsworth declares under a pressing necessity, the doctrine of immortality requiring antenatal immortality as its assumption, because, as I have elsewhere said,

That must end which has begun,

it only expresses in fact the uncertainty of opening reason, endeavouring after some basis of understanding.

The very earliest experience still remaining in my memory is of this character. The young nursemaid who used to take me and my little sister to walk in the King's Park had been made my confidante in the mental difficulties that were troubling me, and had apparently thought them dangerous, requiring to be told to my mother. This she did on our returning home, and it was, no doubt, the hearing of the questions I had asked her repeated in this way to my mother that caused me to remember them ever after. I had asked her if she saw me as I saw her, was I living, and how was it I came to live, and if I did not wish to live what should I do? My only feeling was shame at having exposed myself, but what my mother thought of me I could not tell. She only sent the girl away, and in her affectionate way told me not to

say things to anybody but her, that I must live to grow a big boy, when I would know better, and so on.

About the same early period it must have been that I had another experience. Whether a little earlier or later I have no means of determining; this, however, is of no importance, as the impression I am about to describe remained on my mind for a considerable period of time. My impression or experience was this, that I could transfer myself from the top to the bottom of the stair, from the upper landing to the hall, without the action of going down step by step. I cannot think it was wholly a delusion, because I remember on one occasion standing still for a moment after so descending with a feeling of wonder. Perhaps this may have been the last time I had so descended, or supposed I had so descended; it was my awaking to something. Other impressions of a similar kind I had that I am now unable to describe, and I have come to this as a possible problematical conclusion on the subject. When we arrive at the possession of conscious volition, when we understand somewhat our faculties and powers, physical or mental, the Will is shut off; our chance of acting by any other means than such as are in accordance with or through these faculties and powers is lost. I make this attempt at explanation because I cannot believe that Wordsworth himself would have reasoned out his text as a metaphysical conviction; he would not have contended for the soul new born into the body continuing

to possess powers through the memory of having previously practised them !

This supposition or experience of being able to change place without stepping over the intervening space was only defined to myself at a later time. I never tried to employ it, because when it existed I had not connected thought and action, and afterwards, every one walking only on their feet, I did so too. When we fully attain to conscious volition as a possession, to the antagonism of the *me* and the *not me*, we suddenly become a rational hide-bound creature. I believe I remember the moment in which this knowledge came to me, because I am very certain I was a slow and obtuse child, difficult to inoculate with even common-sense.

At that time my elder brothers kept rabbits, old and young. They were little boys ; I was a child who had no experiences but those of a happy home. These rabbits were brought out every afternoon to feed on the grass under a few apple-trees in the garden, and when the elder boys were otherwise engaged the little one was planted down beside the great white creatures like one of themselves, only to watch that no harm befell them. One evening the little child amused himself by digging into the turf and tearing it up by the roots. Raising a great turf, a new world was exhibited to him. The sensation returns upon me now ; it was swarming with annulose and centipedal creatures, to me previously undreamt of—supernatural yet vital activities, like the monsters that swarm about Saint Anthony in Dutch pictures

or in Flaubert's wonderful romance. I rose straight up, throwing the turf from me. I was apart from these and from everything else; I was naked, as it were, and alone in an antagonistic creation, accountable to myself only for preservation and well-being.

Becoming acquainted with this hitherto unknown world in a turf of grass was a new birth: it originated a new departure of speculation; in some measure it resembled the "conversion of a sinner" as described in religious tracts, but exactly in the opposite direction; it was a change from the repose of instinct to that of thoughtful perplexity and unrest, responsibility and isolation, never to be again lost. The mystery underlying all nature is around us everywhere every moment of life, but this was its first presentation to my experience from without.

These childish difficulties are in no way different from the mental difficulties of later life, but the peculiarity in my case was, I fancy, that they presented themselves at so early an age. I had not begun to learn my Catechism, and was unprovided with the idea of God: that overpowering mystery used by parents to explain all minor mysteries. When the existence of the Deity was first taught me I have no remembrance; it must have made no immediate impression, being received as a metaphysical or theological tenet having no relation to me or to actual life. That the Supreme One made me, or required duties of me, as I was afterwards taught, never vitally affected me; so little, indeed,

that it remained with me a question whether the existence of an All-creating, All-preserving Power ever grows up in the childish mind. Is it ever there self-suggested, or is it only planted there as a tenet—a necessary one, but planted there by the paternal instructor, and received gladly, it may be, yet with difficulty?

Having mentioned the paternal instructor, I may go on to say that much as he desired our well-being in relation to religion, and though he set great store by our precise knowledge of Bible and Catechism, he never appeared to think any explanation necessary, or questioned our powers of understanding, so that we learned by rote. For myself, I confess to have been very backward: backward at school, and at learning what others of the same age found easy. It was long before I could tell the hour of the day by the eight-day clock; the amiable uncle winding it up every Saturday night used to try to teach me in vain. My first Latin master, when I was sent to a little day-school kept by an excellent and kind elderly Quaker in the neighbourhood to get the rudiments, so that I might enter the second class at the High School next year, laboured equally in vain with cases and declensions.

Surrounding our little domain on the Arthur's Seat side lay a herbalist's garden: two or three acres of ground growing mint, rhubarb (not so common then), and medicinal herbs, in the centre being a wooden tenement in which the curious small old gentleman in black, Dr. Bachelor, distilled scents

for perfumers. This field or garden had formerly belonged to our house, as there still existed a door of communication, but the proper entrance now was in St. Leonard's Lane, just opposite the beginning of the narrow way called Dumbiedykes. On this entrance gate was a brass plate, not bearing the doctor's name, but the words *Hinc Sanitas*. I had just begun with the dear old Quaker, so I must have been young, as I was thought too young to be trusted at the High School alone. My father had taken me out a walk. On returning he stopped opposite this gate. We had met and carried back with us some friends, so he drew me forward and asked me what the words meant. I could not tell. In the presence of these friends he laughed at my inability to translate two such simple words. My shy sensibility was so wounded at his making game of me, as I fancied, I was so savage at his not knowing his laugh would wound me, that when we reached home I shut myself in my bedroom, got hold of my Bible,—it was a Sunday evening and the book was handy,—and there I took an oath, as I had been told it was to be done, by holding the Bible straight up in my right hand, that when I was old enough and strong enough I would be the death of him.

About a year after this I was entered in the High School, and the very first day had to fight a pitched battle and lost it: one of the greatest misfortunes of my life, as I never had the courage to fight again and recover my position. To attack a

newcomer was common, so a boy of my own size was set on to push me down the steps on leaving the schoolroom. I turned round and hit him. Immediately a ring was formed; two bigger boys stood with extended arms holding a bonnet or cap between them; the combatants were placed on either side, thus prevented from rushing together and substituting wrestling for boxing. My discomfiture was not very complete,—the master appeared at the door,—but it was enough to make me more afraid of fighting than I had been even in tender years.

Childhood has the credit of being a Garden of Eden, but it is rather an enchanted island full of strange noises, and haunted by a Caliban. One of my secret speculations was why my mother had married my father, and if it was possible she could like him, when I rather feared him than otherwise. But my most painful delusion was that I had committed the sin that could never be forgiven, which I found to be the sin against the third person of the Trinity, a very indefinite definition. This perplexed me for years, and buried me many times in despair. All through life some of us are subject to such clouds of misery, sensitive natures clear of any of the elements of insanity. I am in truth only now beginning to master them! "The child is father of the man" would be a very good maxim, were he not the man himself.

Thinking over all this when writing my little *Poet's Harvest Home*,¹ I may be allowed to open

¹ [In 1882, five years after this autobiography was begun.—ED.]

this manuscript and add to this short chapter certain pieces I endeavoured to express myself by in relation to the same experience.

LITTLE BOY

I

Little boy, whose great round eye
Hath the tincture of the sky,
Answer now, and answer true,
Whence, and why, and what are you ?
And he answered, " Mother's boy."
Yes, yes, I know,
But 'twas not so
Six years ago.
You are mother's anxious joy,
Mother's pet,
But yet——
A trouble came within the eye
That had some tincture of the sky.

II

I looked again, within that eye
There was a question, not reply :
I only shaded back his hair,
And kissed him there ;
But from that day
There was more thinking and less play,
And that round eye
That had a tincture of the sky
Was somewhat shaded in its sheen ;
It looked and listened far away,
As if for what can not be seen.

III

Then I turned about and cried,
But who am I ?
Prompting thus the dawning soul,
I cannot hide
The want of a reply,
Though travelling nearer to the goal
Where we take no note of time :
I can only say, I AM—
A phrase, a word that hath no rhyme,
The name God called Himself, the best
To answer the weak patriarch's quest.

IV

"Why talk nonsense to a child ?"
Asks the mother from the fire,
Listening through both back and ears,
With a mother's wakened fears ;
"Already is he something wild,
Saying he can fly down stair !
I do desire
You questioning men would have a care ;
He is my child, my only one,
You'll make him try to touch the sun !"

CHAPTER IV

THE OLD PARLIAMENT SQUARE

BESIDES the house, the centre of my enchanted island, there was another locality almost as interesting to the boy. On the side of the Old Parliament House Square in these days rose two "lands," as they were called: enormously high and wide houses, each furnished with a wide central stone staircase with landings giving access to four houses, properly speaking—that is, four sets of four or six large rooms, each with its own heavy door, garnished with nameplate and bell. The particular gigantic staircase I allude to was the largest one, and was called the Parliament Stairs. Allan Ramsay, in one of his minor poems, still moderately interesting, describes it, in his time a fashionable quarter, and the abode of Celia, his heroine in "The Morning Interview"—

Where Charles's statue stands in lasting brass
Amidst a lofty square, which strikes the sight
With spacious fabrics of stupendous height,
Whose roofs into the clouds advance so high,
They seem the watch-towers of a further sky.

Six stories in height in the front, these towering

houses of the centre street of the old town were built upon a ridge, so that there were ten or twelve double flights of steps to the back, the lowest set of rooms or cellars with yard being a wine store—the wine store kept by a brother of Henry Brougham. Above him came bookbinders, then type-printers, till, entering from the level of the Parliament Square, on one side was a perukier with an imposing assembly of law-wigs of various grades in the windows, and on the other a law-stationer with parchments exhibited in front of green baize curtains. The two top strata of the pyramid belonged to my father ; they were higher than the roof of St. Giles's Church ; and even this height had originally been inhabited by lawyers, as we boys found crammed into presses under the ceilings of the garrets contracts and charters on vast sheets of vellum, bearing seals or blue stamps, with small pieces of gold leaf inserted, which we used to clip off and collect. In the same garrets were remaining large sheets of transparencies, pictures strained on rude frames, that had decorated "the land" on the illuminations for the victories of Nelson, Duncan, or Howe, or even so late as Wellington, done by some of the cleverer pupils or apprentices of previous years, or by the artists of my father's youth, even by David Allan himself.

Since 1799 my father had possessed this workshop. There were six windows in a row, each window giving light to two men, skilled engravers or apprentices. A narrow table passed all along the



Sketch from Memory by W.D.G.

Engraving by James & Sons, Glasgow

View from Workshop in Old Parliament Square.

apartment at the height of the centre of the casement, accommodated with high chairs, to which they deftly ascended by means of steps. Thus one man had the lower part of each window, another the upper. In the rooms above were the printing presses, many of them ; and in the atelier altogether, not only were there all kinds of gear belonging to the now nearly forgotten practice of copperplate-engraving for miscellaneous uses: etching, mezzotint, and aquatint, printing in colours and in the ordinary way ; but no line was drawn between the inventive painter and his copyist with the graver.

This peculiarity makes it worth while to dwell on this establishment, as it was in some sense possibly the last of its kind, the latest descendant of the mixed trade certainly carried on by Albert Dürer in the great house still standing near the Thiergarten Gate of Nürnberg. My father, indeed, was not a Dürer. He cared little for painting. The profession of painter was considered by him a poorly-remunerated profession ; and he valued engraving most for its facilities in connection with trade. But out of his "shop," as he called it, came some clever Little Masters. The first of these was Douglas, who became a skilful miniature painter, represented in the earliest Edinburgh exhibition in 1808 by a portrait of Mrs. Boswell of Auchinleck, and other works. Then came Tom Brown, who took a captain's commission in the Forfarshire Volunteers, and so disappeared from the arts, in after years being widely known as a writer on natural history by

the *Zoologist's Text Book* and many other works. Among many others, the ablest and most versatile was John Burnet, who from boyhood showed equal powers in design and in the use of the graver. Many books at that day, published by Mozley of Gainsborough and others (not one of which, however, have I ever been able to meet on any book-stall, often as I have looked for them), were almost designed on the plate by John Burnet. His brother James, a much inferior artist, made a considerable celebrity as a pastoral painter before he died in early life. A third brother, Thomas, published a volume of poems. Heaven knows I never read them; only I admired as a boy the frontispiece by his brother John. This Thomas Burnet, twenty years afterwards, I lit upon inhabiting a house in Finsbury Square, he having by that time developed into the incumbent of one of the almost sinecure parishes in the City.

There has been to me throughout the course of years an actual dramatic interest in noting the changes and reappearances of the *dramatis personæ* of life, which interest will, I hope, be ever felt in reading over these records. With John Burnet I had associations from the earliest time. He and his brothers became closely associated with Wilkie in their apprentice days at the Trustees' Academy, then the Edinburgh Government School of Art. All my father's pupils were sent there at first, and afterwards, when John followed Wilkie to London and began to engrave after his works, he always sent to

his old master proofs of these plates, the arrival of which I remember. When I too gravitated in the same direction, I saw a great deal of Burnet, and through him something of his friend Allan Cunningham and Allan's son Peter. It appears to me now that Burnet was one of the ablest and most accomplished men in art criticism I have known. When I knew him best he had completed his illustrated treatises on *Colour*, *Composition*, and other subjects, which immediately became the text-books of all young artists, and the Duke of Wellington had purchased his large picture, "Greenwich Pensioners' Festival." Shortly after, however, his one child, a very fair, intelligent daughter, made a rather clandestine marriage with an engaging pupil he had foolishly received into his family; and subsequently nothing prospered with John Burnet.

Mozley of Gainsborough's publications ceased after John Burnet left, and for other books that came to receive such attractions as the engraver could give them my father employed Alexander Carse, ~~also~~ one of the exhibitors in that early exhibition of 1808, and others, all incomparably inferior to "the apprentice hand." Still a certain amount of designing and inventing was carried on, and the successors of those already mentioned made what were called "lottery prints," like the *bilderbogen* so well appreciated in Germany. Every blank wall about the city was then in the possession of old soldiers and other industrious decayed people, and covered with long strings of these and other engravings,

coloured or plain, to please children. These were rude performances in execution, but sometimes very curious and ingenious. There was "The Battle of the Rats and Cats," and of "The Frogs and the Mice"; also "The Battle of the Umbrellas," "The Wonders of the World," "Cinderella," "The Dancing Bears," and a hundred others. A popular subject was "The Cries of Edinburgh," several sets being furnished with verses below invented for the occasion. These "cries" themselves have long since disappeared. There was "Hot peas," boiled in salted water and sold warm in the evenings; "Junipers and sloes," carried about at the beginning of winter, collected on the Pentlands and elsewhere, I was told; "Butter-milk," a morning cry by a countryman with a cart; "Roasting jacks and toasting forks," and many others. On Monday morning, the appointed time, these old soldiers and others climbed the Parliament Stairs, and the apprentices supplied them with their weekly stock.

The earliest visits of the boys to this interesting locality were caused by the circumstance of the book-keeper of the establishment, the mildest snuff-coloured old creature, having been a "*stickèd* minister," and so able to coach them in their Latin lessons. This was of little interest, I am sorry to say, to me, who never was great at lessons; but the character of the place, so in keeping with the character of the St. Leonard's house,—the rooms panelled and similarly painted white, but now grimy and smoked, and hung about with large prints, Le Brun's "Alexander's

Triumphs," and small ones, my father's own landscapes,—was powerfully attractive. The paternal proclivity to business rather than to art had, however, now made him adopt new methods. He introduced into Edinburgh engraving on steel instead of copper, and also lithography; but not content with adding these legitimate adjuncts to his speciality, he was continually trying inventions, such as the manufacture from seaweed of a black powder to supersede the expensive Frankfort material for plate printing-ink. This failing, he actually kept men pounding cork in great mortars for a similar purpose, but it was found to be impossible to pound cork; it was a product as difficult to attain as the drop of "the essence of tinder" in attempting to find which the enthusiast in *Roderick Random* set his room on fire.

My dear father—I now think of him with much veneration: veneration and respect, with a smile underlying these virtuous feelings. He lost much money and time over his new ideas, making globes celestial and terrestrial, and boxes of water-colours that would not rub down! He vainly pounded corks, and at the same time taught his children that Blake's designs were the icons of what they would experience in another life! In 1824, when I was thirteen, the whole "land" of the "Parliament Stairs," with many others and a church as well, went up into the sky in a volume of flame, seen all the way to Stirling. I was too young to be allowed to go with the elders to rescue things, but I sat half the night at a top window of the St. Leonard's home

with my mother and little sister seeing the successive blazes ascend.

One other reminiscence before I shift the scene. Some writers have expressed wonder at the number of prints the early engravers—Dürer, for instance—must have been able to take from the copper before wearing out the incised plate. In this emporium were accumulated hundreds, I may say thousands, of old plates, many having been bought by weight as old metal, being otherwise accounted worthless. Among these were some originals by Guercino and Hollar, both of which printed nearly as dark as they must have done at first, the views in London by the latter in particular. The plates on which these were engraved had been made flat and hard by hammering; they were not cast, but beaten, and so were twice as hard and heavy as the modern manufactured article, hence the difference in their withstanding the wear of the printer's hand. This accounts for the number Dürer and others must have printed, as we know from the frequency of impressions still existing of his finest copperplates.

CHAPTER V

COUNTRY COUSINS—RELIGION

THE autumn holiday and change to sea or country quarters was then as imperative as now. At first it used to be to the sea, where a herculean little old mermaid with hair on her chin, who used to call us dears, scoured us, howling with open mouths,—an operation that made me forswear salt water from that day forth. But at an early day in my recollections my mother's three cousins—brothers tall and amiable, all worthy of being preachers of the Gospel of peace—had got located in three several parishes, and used to be our guests as members of the Assembly of the Kirk in May. We boys, in return, were sent to them,—to the eldest of the three in particular, he being a bachelor, with whom lived his mother,—to spend our school holidays.

If any chance or stroke of luck could have made the boy a landscape painter, it would have been these autumn visits to a manse half-way between Stirling and the Grampians. The whole range of these mountains, separated from us by the sloping garden and a wide stretch of moor and morass, was

visible from our bedroom windows, in the upper corners of which the martins built, showing us why Banquo thought that the air was delicate. Through the peat moss and among the farms the winding Forth hid itself and reappeared sundry times, and in the very early mornings the white mist filled the whole intervening valley like a level sea, over which Ben Venue, Ben Ledi, and all the rest drew a magical line between us and heaven. Close by the front of the manse was the churchyard wall, a closely-serried mass of tombstones, and the plain little church had a belfry over one gable, from which depended a rope which we often assisted the sexton to pull at curfew time.

After breakfast the servants entered, bringing with them the smell of the byre, and the youngest one, who was always conscious of present boyhood as I was of her mysterious neighbourhood, distributed the Bibles for family worship, and we all formed two devout circles. The part of this daily service which had never become easy to the pastor was the psalm-singing; this he must lead, although he scarcely knew one tune from another. He got over it, however, by a sort of conjuration with his right forefinger, having first mentioned the tune intended, when the dairymaid, who was the precentor's daughter, struck in and carried the performance triumphantly through. Once a week came the schoolmaster to breakfast. A pompous man he was beside the modest minister, who allowed him with a gentle smile to outshine in long words and figures of speech.

It is unnecessary to say how profoundly affected by religious things the boy already described was. The Bible was to him an inexhaustible treasure, inspiring equally awe and delight. The two books in that treasure-house most read and re-read were the Song of Songs and the Revelations; the mystery of the last, never even attempted to be explained to him, gave its portentous scenery an absolutely dangerous power over the childish mind. The Shorter Catechism was dear to him. I hope it is dear to many still in Scotland, and I say this although to me theological or clerical teaching is no longer necessary or profitable; but in childhood it is so to every generation, at least within the domestic circle. The Scotchman is a thinker born, and also by habit; he is so all over the world wherever he goes, and if he learns the "Shorter Catechism of the Divines assembled at Westminster" in his childhood, there are various intellectual follies he can never be guilty of. He cannot worship the Holy Coat of Treves or the wood of the true Cross, or believe in Transubstantiation on the one hand, nor in the harmless cant of Natural Religion, with such vapid maxims as "From nature up to nature's God," on the other. He will know that religion has nothing to do with physics; that nature is a fatalist and an atheist; that religion has only an existence in the soul, in the conscious kernel of us; and that morality even has little to do with it, except as an act of obedience allied to self-preservation.

Amidst all the changes of opinion throughout

life the Shorter Catechism theology has remained with me; but at a very early age all the forms, observances, sacraments quickly faded from my mind. They simply appeared to be properly amenable to, and fittingly judged by, rationalism. "William," said the good minister one day, meeting me in the churchyard as he crossed from church to manse; "William," with a serious smile on his lip, "you must be baptized. What should I do were you to die? I would have to bury you without the wall!" I had been unwell, and the half-yearly sacrament, "The Holy Fair" of Burns, was approaching; a young man had stood the Sunday before on the cutty-stool, a penance rarely practised, but not then entirely disused, necessary to allow the pious sinner to receive the sacred elements. "But come with me," he continued, "and I will show you the bees at the top of the house."

He had a bunch of keys in his hand; we entered the manse, and ascended to a place under the slates, usually locked. There was one ironbound chest in the apartment, and the air was heavy with the smell of apples piled up in a corner. I heard the bees, but did not see them, and in the attempt to do so undid a little hinged casement in the roof, when, on looking round, I saw the minister raise the lid of the chest, and lo! the vessels of the temple were before my eyes. "I have called Bezaleel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with understanding and knowledge in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works,

to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass." These were not by Bezaleel, the cunning workman, and nothing at all as art ; but the boy had never before seen even a brass collection-plate, and these objects, simple as they were, were associated with sacred things. He takes them in his hand : they are like other objects solid and heavy ; they are merely a mighty great tankard, two pairs of cups gilt in the interiors, two pairs of pewter-plates curiously stamped round the rims, two great Low German brazen platters, with Adam and Eve on one and the Spies from Canaan on the other in relief pretty nearly worn out. I looked in the face of the good clergyman after a moment, absorbed in interest and reverence. His expression told me that he thought the young nature was struck with some touch of superstition, but it was otherwise ; the boy was recovering himself, and saying inwardly, " Eating and drinking, what can these have to do with the soul ? "

The assembly of assistant ministers, a great pulpit set up for open-air preaching, the sacred ceremony of the Sunday, with the manifest earnestness of the speakers and the decorous seriousness of the people, were very unlike the not very witty description in Burns's " Holy Fair," which poem, written very shortly after he had himself stood twice on the ignominious stool of penance, has always appeared to me to be an offensive and vulgar performance.

The opportunity had been taken for holding a meeting of the Synod, several members being here

already to assist in the half-yearly celebration, and on the Monday arrived the clerk, mounted on a rusty old nag, the large folios of the minutes of former meetings slung before the rider, who was a hilarious little man with a great wen on his forehead, such as we see on the portraits of St. Evremond. He was hailed with delight by the ministers, and was immediately pounced upon as the butt of the company.

This must have been my last visit to the manse. The boy was then assuming something of the young man, the "genius" in private, and had in his pocket, not a big-bladed knife and a top, but the draft of a poem of many hundred lines in blank verse, on the sublimest theme: a poem he hoped would be the grandest ever written in the English tongue. Its main subject, besides a long didactic and moral introduction, was the narrative of an overpowering necessity that took possession of an angel to see the personality of God. Nothing could be more characteristic of the intellectual puzzles which the youth continued to formulate to himself. The angel rose on his immense wings and passed over all the paradises of heaven; he passed out of these, and the planetary spheres were then described; he suspended his flight upon the verge of creation and called out, "Where is God, and what is He?" and was answered only by a tremble of eclipse that ran along the unpeopled stars. Still he flew farther and farther, passing over an abysm where the spectral Ideals of things *that were to be* rose up and issued

past him to take on Being. An infinite silence it was, and he returned out of it in fear: God was nowhere to be found.

This poem I kept by me for years and rewrote. It shall be mentioned again in connection with Professor Wilson and Sir Walter Scott. The programme of it given above is copied from a notebook of a later time, when I destroyed the poem, by that time grown into great bulk, after I had read Thomas Taylor's translations of Plato and the Alexandrians. But here is another invention from the same notebook of nearly the same date of composition, which I consider still worthy of preservation.

THE PILLARS OF SETH

These are the Words carved on the stones raised by Seth, who had seen the light and the wisdom in the faces of the Cherubim, the Messengers. Now when his eyes were dim by reason of his eight hundred years and his heart was failing, he called unto him Enos his first-born, and all his sons and their wives, and said unto them, "Behold the two stones that I have raised, that I have graven upon, that wisdom may be preserved. On the east sides and on the west sides, where the sun comes up and where the sun goes down, have I written."

So they went from him, and they looked upon the west side of the first pillar and found upon it ten signs, and these were the signs of Numbers:

ONE

is the Eternal who existeth in time and beyond it: the Infinite who appeareth through all things and beyond them.

TWO

is Antagonism of the forces that can meet in strife
or in love.

THREE

is Life: out of two cometh a third and motion, new
birth and the cry of childhood.

FOUR

is a Thing fashioned and made, repeated and broken.

FIVE

is Multiform and fashioned and made, scattered and sown.

SIX

is of the Earth, multiform and fashioned and made,
returning to the earth.

SEVEN

is from Above; there are seven seeds in the pod that
maketh the bread of angels.

EIGHT

is from Below, and is strong, and turneth the neck towards
Tophet.

NINE

is a Likeness of the greatest and best, but divergent and
weak.

TEN

is the Circle of adamant, hiding us from ourselves.

Then turned they to the east side of the stone, and
saw thereon the sign of One, so they knew that the
writing related to God; but the writing there graven they
could not read, nor any of the letters interpret. So they

passed on unto the other pillar of stone, and looked upon the west side thereof, and these were the words they found :

Man alone is like the forest beast that shakes the trees
with the sound of his dying.

Man in the city is like the lion of the zodiac that returns
every year bringing heat.

Woman alone is like a cloud that passeth with rain and
a shadow silently withdrawn.

Woman in the city is like a well that gives out wine to
the thirsty and oil to the darkened.

Meet every man as a Messenger ; every soul hath his
message.

Wash the feet of the stranger that he tarry not but for
love.

Make the body your servant and the earth your slave,
make them answer thee.

If ye have bread, or if ye have wisdom, give them to those
who are in want.

The richest man is the giver, the strongest is the helpful,
the best is the child.

When the truth of these sayings is lost, the waters shall
rise and the windows of heaven be opened.

Then they turned to the east side of the stone, as they had before done to the east side of the first stone, and they saw thereon the sign of Three ; and they knew that the writing related to generation and birth and the future, and that it was prophetic. But they could read no word and no letter thereof. Then they said one to another, "Why cannot we read the carving on the eastern sides of the stones, nor understand the speech thereof? Let us return to our father and say, 'Ere memory fail thee

by reason of years, instruct us, we pray thee, in the language of the rising sun'"; so they returned.

Then as they approached—in number six score and five, sons and sons' sons, daughters and their daughters—they saw their father Seth sitting on the great seat from whence he delivered justice, and on either side of him sat a Messenger on a caparisoned white camel, with their faces towards him as he sat, their backs towards the men and women as they came; and when these approached nearer they saw that their father's head had fallen back into the hollow of the stone seat, and his golden staff had slid out of his hand and lay upon the ground. So they stood still in silence, all stood still at once, till the two Messengers began to move from them, and the camels went towards the west and they saw no more of them. Then Enos lifted up his voice and said, "These have come for our father, and lo! he is dead; never more can the writing be read," and they all with one voice answered him, "Never more can the writing be read."

CHAPTER VI

THE MANSE OF KIPPEN—BROTHER ROBERT

I MUST go back a few years to my first and second visits to the manse of Kippen before I leave my boyhood altogether. I had just entered the second class, Mr. Irving's, in the High School, when an incident took place that altered entirely the happiness of the home circle and the prospects of the family.

It was in the autumn, on a Saturday, I know, for I was at home. The white riding horse that my father kept in the vain attempt thereby to overtake health was waiting at the door, and he was preparing to mount, when David appeared from town with a pale face and a parcel of letters. Father returns into the house, the horse is remanded to the stable, a long period of silence follows, an inexplicable sense of something amiss comes upon me, I enter and venture to look into the dining-room. The tall back of my father standing is only visible ; I do not see his face, but that of my mother I do see. She sits opposite with the table between them, on which lies a printed sheet and the letters David had

brought. The ever assiduous and patient nurse and mother is transformed into the inflexible judge; she is stern and terrible as Hela. The short soft maternal figure I liked to be near, whose hand I liked to feel, was awe-inspiring; I stood stock-still, and by and by backed out again and closed the door. What had he done? It was plain he had done something. Had he murdered somebody long ago, and had he just been found out?

Days passed, days of unspeakable unhappiness. I went to school as usual, when one of the many savages about me said my father was a bankrupt! I confess to thinking if that was all it mattered little; but an hour after, as I sat quite unable to draw my attention down to Cæsar's *exercitus*, a messenger came for me, and every eye was turned upon me as I collected my books into the satchel and left.

At home I found my father ready for a journey, and I was to be his companion. I need not dwell on the unhappiness of that day and the next with him. The state of mental confusion into which I brought myself was such that I thought he had intentionally left me when I lost sight of him in landing from the steamboat at Stirling in the dusk of evening. After all, he was not bankrupt, but he had become security, had placed his name to bills for several thousand pounds, without confiding the deed to the maternal ear till now, so that all his available property, including my mother's marriage portion, that had been hitherto held sacred, had now to

go. He left me with the minister, and a week or two after my mother and little sister came to join me.

Why is it that one moment of time and one little scene of no particular importance should be impressed on the mind perfectly and minutely, while all the before and after have faded away? I see, as if it had happened to-day, a scene in the minister's glebe. The pastor and my mother walk backwards and forwards under a line of tall plane-trees, in which many cushats built, seriously talking, and I knew she was recounting to him the history of my father's affairs; while my sister—so dear to us all, but who was never to grow to womanhood—and I sat by a lovely well frequented in dry seasons by the villagers, lined with masonry out of a seam of which, inaccessible to me, grew a tall foxglove. She too was in a child's fashion repeating the same story to me, about the two men who came for father and could not find him, recounting in a low voice, with her mass of red hair hanging over her brightly shining eyes, always ceasing as the elders passed us and recommencing when they were far enough gone again.

The diminished resources and my father's increasing bad health were the cause of my afterwards losing years of that valuable period of opening life. But to return to these dear autumn visits to Stirlingshire. I have already indicated the beginning of the autocratic dispensation established by David, my eldest brother. Something must be said of the

second, who was only two years my senior. He was an exception to all of us ; to have no tie, no duties, no school was his ambition. He was the first to begin writing poetry, but it had no executive quality, nor any good in it save a feeling for nature such as, in an imitative way, Burns initiated. He also showed some power in humorous drawing, some examples of which I still preserve ; but the incurably erratic tendency of his moral nature made the handsome, amiable, and able man dangerous in the extreme. This was known somehow to me, the youngest boy, from infancy. One of our autumn visits to the minister of Kippen was all prepared when, by some accident, our mother could not leave home. We two boys of tender years were sent off by ourselves, a letter having been written to two old maiden ladies in Stirling, sisters in the Baptist Church, to meet us on the arrival of the boat and take care of us for the night.

These dear old maids were the tiniest creatures, the eldest sitting in a kind of state when at home, and the younger bustling about like a fly ; and they lived in the thickest part of the town, under a steeple whose chime or short carillon sounded every half-hour all night through. When the boat was drawn up to the quay on this occasion no sisters were there, and Robert was delighted, immediately proposing that we should go to an inn. He had plenty of money, and we would think what we should do next in the morning. The little brother, who thought of inns as places where murders were generally per-

petrated, and where fabulous sums of money were demanded from the unwary traveller, would not consent, was indeed paralysed with fear, when to his great relief the two little sisters dashed at us and carried us to their home.

Next morning we were to walk to the manse of the village of Kippen, a distance of ten miles ; but already in the early light, in bed, the fixed idea of the elder boy was again brought forward : we would do as men do—take a pedestrian tour and live in inns, till our money was done ! We were to be met by the minister's man ; but this did not matter, and we would say nothing at breakfast. But the sisters were too much for us ; they saw us on the way, and sat on the high castle-walk till we were out of sight. So we went straight on, but Robert was not quite so to be cured of his adventurous spirit : we turned into a strange road, either by accident or design on his part, and we were lost. A child's geography is like that of the early Greeks surrounded by Kimmerian darkness, inhabited by hippogriffs, troglodytes, and nameless monsters. Soon the road terminated in a great iron gate with a lodge, and infinite silence around it. Then we rang the bell, but without any answer ; next we entered, and the silence being unbroken we went forward through a lawn into a beautiful garden. This being also silent, we returned to the lodge and entered it, finding ourselves in a neat little room with a blazing fire, but tenantless. The delight of Robert was becoming great, for here was the possibility of an adventure ; even the young

one was becoming excited by a sense of enchantment like that in nursery story-books, such as in the marvellous history of Beauty and the Beast. We were preparing to sit down and make ourselves happy, when we were electrified by a shriek in a feeble female voice from a chamber above, which drove us out and away running till we were tired.

We had not gone out of our way above a mile, so on meeting a man with an empty chaise, into which we got, we were soon on the highway again. "Did you see him touch his hat when I gave him the money?" said Robert proudly on leaving the modest chariot. This childish little adventure and even this last trifling speech have never been forgotten, because of the indication of character they afforded to the painstaking younger brother, who was by and by looked upon by the mother as in charge of the elder in all his outgoings and incomings.

Let me finish his history here. Perseverance in anything was repulsive to him, and at about twenty-five he determined on emigrating to Demerara. I saw him embark from Greenock, after waiting for weeks for a favourable wind. Very amusing weeks these were with a number of other young fellows all similarly delayed. One of them copied on letter-paper whole pages of regret on leaving his native land out of *Thaddeus of Warsaw*, to send home to his mother when he landed at St. John's. "Beginnings of home letters, my boy; won't my mamma be delighted?" was his explanation when I asked him what he was after. A year passed, and Robert was

home again, as handsome, good-natured, and weak as ever. A few years later he did not come down to breakfast : was found dead in bed. All over the region of the heart was black from suffusion of blood : he had died from heart disease.

CHAPTER VII

PROFESSOR JOHN WILSON—SIR WALTER SCOTT—FIRST
EXHIBITED PAINTING — ENGRAVING — DINNER AT
REV. J. THOMSON'S.

I MUST now come to an end with these very juvenile reminiscences, however seductive they are. Childhood is the time of blind receptivity. But for this very reason the narration of its stories is often altogether barren and trivial to the grown mind, in which the lessons they originally taught have been not only learnt but also forgotten. The poem in several hundred lines of verse, and the other on the Pillars of Seth, were a sign that adolescence was approaching. My aspiration in poetry being towards the sublime, and the subjects being of the religious-didactic kind, for some years produced no adequate result—adequate result, I mean, as training in an educational point of view. The truth is, I suffered under a family mania for Blake, and thought Blair's *Grave* and Young's *Night Thoughts*—the only two books my father seemed to know, restricted by poverty as well as by mental habits—ought to be my two greatest books as well! Had I lit upon Christopher Smart's

“Song of David” or Milton’s “Hymn on the Nativity” first, another kind of influence would have taken possession of one who had no notion whatever of what was orthodox or otherwise, and entertained a natural dislike for sermons.

My first contact with the literary life of the day was, on the other hand, altogether uninteresting to me. I was getting my Latin exercise overhauled by the “*stickèd* minister” one day when a publisher, one of my father’s clients, brought in a short stoutish countryman in a light-coloured suit, who wanted an imitation of the writing of 1700 made as a frontispiece to a book. The “*stickèd* minister” looked at this countryman, and whispered to my father, who immediately expressed his pleasure at meeting with the “Ettrick Shepherd.” I must have been about thirteen, as the book in question was published anonymously by Hogg in 1824¹: a very poor, eyeless sort of performance, a pretended narrative of the Puritan times, intended to satirise the religion of the Kirk, which I think has never been reprinted. The Ettrick Shepherd acknowledged in a manly way my father’s complimentary recognition; said he was Hogg, the shepherd; he supposed as having “begun as a shepherd, always a shepherd, and a poet too, maybe, as you have said.” Not knowing “Bonny Kilmeny,” or indeed anything of his, I had not much belief that this countryman really was a poet.

About the same time my father had some slight business intercourse with Sir Walter Scott through

¹ [*Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner.*]

his publisher Constable, who was also the publisher of the older *Scots Magazine*, the illustrated periodical which went down before the entirely novel attractions of Blackwood. He was proud of this slight acquaintance, till one day in the publisher's shop the "Great Unknown," as the author of *Waverley* was then called, although known to every one, impatient at having to wait for the return of a message-boy sent out for bill-stamps, burst into a shower of oaths. Nearly every one did so in those days, but my father pronounced it unworthy of either a Christian or a gentleman. He acknowledged, however, at the same time, that he did not appreciate either Sir Walter's poetry or the poetic character; and the fact of his having had the MS. of the *Pleasures of Hope* in his hands, and having refused the publication of that poem by the advice of Dr. Anderson,¹ the editor of the octavo edition of the *British Poets*, showed that he did not underrate himself by saying so.

My earliest real friend and counsellor in poetry was Professor John Wilson, a man whose personality was itself overpowering in an artistic way, with the strength and action of his body, his great "mane" of light brown hair, and the energy of expression in all his features, which found fitting outlet through the rich, loud, demi-savage utterance he knew so well how to modulate. The unaccountable difference between the man himself and his

¹ I was amused to find, on seeing the first edition of the *Pleasures of Hope*, that it was an illustrated little book, the illustrations being partly done by my father; and that it was dedicated to Dr. Anderson, the gentleman who had so feeble an opinion of its chances of success.

accredited works—the *Trials of Margaret Lindsay*, and other things, especially his poetry, so mild and vapid, excepting perhaps one poem, called “Unimore,” which partakes of the endless but rousing rodomontade of his magazine writing—always perplexed me.

Wilson, fond of all strenuous activities of mind and body, was, like my amiable old uncle, fond of cock-fighting. An anecdote, to be found, I am told, in his daughter Mrs. Gordon’s Memoir of her father, of a constant church-going old gentleman whispering to a neighbour in the pew, which was becoming unpleasantly full, to keep off him because he had some “game eggs” in his coat-tail pocket, was originally told of my uncle. From him I got an introductory note to the Professor, and I must now say he was astonishingly patient and considerate in reading whatever I took to him.

My first adventure in that way was asking his opinion of another blank verse didactic affair, better done no doubt than those I have mentioned before, but still showing the same unhappy influence. I was never in his Moral Philosophy Class, but as I was at the time in black for the death of my sister, he took me for one of the students going in for the ministry of the Kirk. When, however, I told him I was going to be an artist, he was even more interested. His opinion, which was written in pencil on a fly leaf of the manuscript, was not sufficiently encomiastic to please me at first reading, but I afterwards thought better of it. He advised

me to turn to some homelier subject, something more within my experience, ending, however, with a general invitation to bring my subsequent performances. The sublime was still the goal of my boyish ambition ; I thought little of his criticism, and determined to go to the greatest Scottish poet of the day—to Sir Walter Scott.

My father would not or could not give me a letter to him, but he procured one, with a grim smile of contempt, keeping, however, my secret from my brothers, whose satire I was afraid of. I rubbed off Wilson's writing and went with a beating heart, I cannot now say to what house,¹—it must have been in 1827-28,—but I think it must have been a temporary residence, as there was not a single book visible in the apartment, nor any sign of family habits. I remember the tall footman who opened the door, and can still hear the great round voice, the voice of a large-bodied man, with which Sir Walter himself called me at once into the room where he was, the dining-room it must have been, immediately on having read my note. He was sitting at a small writing-table in the farther corner of the room, between the fireplace and the window, correcting a parcel of proofs. His staff was leaning beside him against the chair, and his hat was on the carpet ; possibly he had just arrived from Abbotsford. He turned round without getting up, shook me by the hand, told me to bring a

¹ [Probably No. 6 Shandwick Place, which Sir Walter occupied during the winter of 1827-28, and for some time afterwards.—ED.]

chair and sit by him, and entered on the business of my visit at once. Laying down his pen, he pushed back the printed paper, and took my poem in hand. An unwieldy but strong man he appeared at close quarters, a gigantic Jack Horner at the small desk in the corner. There was nothing even on the chimney-piece worthy of remark as far as I remember. I was glad to have him all to myself, but his manner was adapted to make the shyest creature at home. "You are one of the clan," he said, "same name at any rate, and your father comes from Lanarkshire, I think. I have not much time to-day, but perhaps I can spare enough. I am a busy man, you know." After this encouraging beginning, he opened my poem and began to read, but soon went on, "You have chosen blank verse, better write in rhyme; twenty people read rhyme for one that enjoys blank verse." "The subject seemed better suited to blank verse," insinuated the youth, and made some reference to Milton. "True, true, you're ambitious, you like Milton, but few can really write in blank verse well. For myself, I would say Thomson is a better model; we must not expect, besides, to work up to Milton. Thomson is the most read of the two, and he was a Scotchman, originally from the Borders; but perhaps you know him as well as Milton." He read a page or two, and then turned to the end. "You end with rhyming couplets; that's not admissible, is it?" I said what was true, that I had in so doing followed

Blair in *The Grave*. "Does Blair indeed wind up in that way, does he indeed?" Then looking about and turning to me as if that was enough about the manuscript, he began to give me some particulars about Blair: he was the uncle—he believed, the uncle—of the Professor of *Belles Lettres*, whose lectures very likely I had read; he, the author of *The Grave*, was the minister of some parish or other near Edinburgh, and so on.

This gossiping talk, indicating the most friendly treatment, was disappointing to the young poet; it was to him like the gabble of a Philistine: the invention, the imaginative power, these were the qualities he expected to have noticed! I left him not only disappointed but mystified. What did Blair's family connections matter? or Thomson's place of birth? But the more I thought of it the more I saw how completely it was in keeping with the solid, simple nature of the large, easy character of Scott. His words were the honest outcome of the man; there was no pretence of interest other than he felt. In this respect they harmonised with the best literature of all ages, especially in poetry. In Edinburgh Sir Walter was then the keystone of the arch, the top tower of the castle; he represented to the farthest borders of civilisation a literary school analogous to the metaphysical school of Reid, Brown, and Stewart: essentially a narrow school, but one thoroughly interesting, healthy, and rational, characteristic of a small community, but of high civilisation. He

was not the literary man by profession, but a gentleman. His interests sprang not from books but from life. It was the same with all the Scotch *litterati*; they were Lords of Session, professors, men of fortune; the ball had been at their feet from boyhood.

How different it was in London! None of the literary men and few of the poets were in a similar position. They were all living hand to mouth, working in a groove, or in a comparatively obscure public office, like dear Charles Lamb, whose writing, like himself, was essentially middle-class. Hazlitt was a noble fellow in his way, but altogether uncertain in habits and position; and with John Scott, Peacock, Reynolds, Leigh Hunt, Keats, we ascend to the pure air of genius, but get no higher in the social scale. This ought to be kept in mind when we sit in judgment on the brutality of Lockhart's Edinburgh articles on the "Cockney" school. The first time I saw Carlyle he told me he was struck by this difference when he came to look about him in London. Carlyle was himself nobody when he lived in Edinburgh, and did not, possibly, wish to be anybody; yet the difference he found in London made him evidently look down on the paid literary adept there. What he had to say against the modern Athenians was against their drinking. When I told him of my obligations to John Wilson, he answered, "Ha! Christopher was a good deal of a man, no doubt, but the whisky was too much for him!" This insinuation was gratuitous and offensive,

when I had just told him of the Professor's friendly attention to me. I replied at some length, and without going about the bush I asserted that he could not have known either him or his circle; but he only broke into a loud laugh and changed the subject.

What Carlyle meant I could not tell, but I still find that Wilson is credited with the savage party-writing in *Blackwood*. The "Z" articles, it is acknowledged, are Lockhart's, but Wilson is accredited with the editorship of that magazine at that time. He told me more than once, apropos to his offer to try to get some poem of mine into the magazine, that he was not, and never had been, absolute editor, the publisher being his own editor.¹ No doubt the whisky element was strong there. The absorbing feats in the "Noctes" were not much overdrawn, nor the humour either, and Professor Wilson's friend—they had been called to the Bar together in 1815—Patrick Robertson—Lord Robertson on the Bench, and Peter among his familiars—was the leading humorist, his humour being essentially of the post-prandial sort.

Having turned twenty, I began to make an appearance as an artist, exhibiting my first little picture, and publishing a set of etchings of the Scenery of Loch Katrine and the Trossachs. My brother David, the autocrat in the family, was in Rome, and I was invited to join a club then established: a club for purely social purposes, called

¹ [This is confirmed by Mr. Blackwood's recent statement.—ED.]

by the name of the patron saint of painters, St. Luke. My first picture, I may say parenthetically, was a landscape ; it represented a dark forest with a hermit praying, from Coleridge's verses—

He kneels at morn and noon and eve,
He hath a cushion plump :
It is the moss that wholly hides
The rotted old oak stump ;

and it was exhibited in the new building on the Mound in 1833-34, one of the earliest of the Scottish Academy exhibitions in that gallery. To return to St. Luke's Club, Professor Wilson was nearly always in the chair, and his toast-giving and speech-making were as brilliant as anything he had ever printed. But the difference between utterances in his rich and mighty voice, heard under the gas and within the influence of the decanter, and the solitary reading of the same tempest of rigmarole, was wide as the poles asunder. These prolonged harangues were merely mental gesticulation, yet they were manifestly most congenial to him. But still I fear displaying a touch of ingratitude towards him in speaking of him so : an ingratitude perhaps suggested by the unfavourable southern verdict of to-day—the verdict of an inferior generation, and of a literary society cautious and reticent to a chilling degree.

At that time the patronising senior invited the juvenile to breakfast ; and the first time I availed myself of the running invitation, neither he nor Mrs. Wilson appeared. Thus I, incredibly shy and wholly unaccustomed to young ladies, was left to his

two daughters, certainly very handsome, and about my own age (afterwards Mrs. Gordon and Mrs. Ferrier). However, time runs through the most embarrassed as well as the roughest day, and after breakfast I felt comparatively at my ease when the Professor burst in, followed by his man bearing his boots, the high boots of the period. He made short work of his morning meal, standing by me and talking all the time, and then disappeared to his class, which met at ten. This ease of manner was most agreeable and rather new to me, and was carried out in his little evening entertainments, which I went to once or twice.

The only young men I remember meeting at these were Henry Glassford Bell and Walker Ord, both poetical aspirants, the possible laureates of future years, but neither possessed of anything more than the facilities engendered in the school. Ord I afterwards met in London, where he gradually disappeared ; but Bell was a different kind of man, in person eligible for a six-feet-club. He had privately circulated a thin quarto of poetry which did not excite my admiration, although I envied the splendour of the printing. He got promotion in his profession of law, but never wholly disappeared from letters, having shortly before he died in 1874 edited the poems of David Gray.¹

¹ I find two sonnets in Professor John Nichol's volume, *Themistocles and other Poems*, in loving memory of Glassford Bell, written after the death of that gentleman. In the opening of the second sonnet the author says :

Two men of weightier metal than these I met in the manufacturing city of the west. These were William Motherwell and William Weir. Both able, and possessed of some literary faculty, but both overridden by the enemy of æsthetic culture, politics. Motherwell was the most genial creature, with a Conservative craze. In his mind Toryism was bound up with poetry, that is with antiquarian romance and "Bonnie Prince Charlie" rubbish. The love of Jacobite ballads has always been associated with their forgery. My own impression is that nearly all Scottish ballads in praise of the Stuarts are of recent manufacture. Poetry with a political bias has always been mendacious. There is not one Jacobite song or tune mentioned in Tytler, Lord Woodhouselee's "Dissertation on the Scottish Music" in his first publication of the *King's Quair* in 1783, nor in Allan Ramsay's *Tea-Table Miscellany*, fifty years earlier. There are many genuine English doggerel Cavalier songs certainly, but the wholesale forgery¹ is in the sentimental celebrations of the later rebellions.

Another contemporary ought to be mentioned here, although I only knew him through his publication while at college, or very immediately after leaving, because the book had some effect upon us youngsters.

Slowly the sacred pageant passed through all
The mourning city in the mourning land,
Where never larger heart nor kindlier hand
Than his had lain beneath the silent pall,


showing the respect attending him at the last. (1882.)

¹ ["Forgery" is hardly the right word. All the best Jacobite ballads were written in the present century, but they did not profess to higher antiquity. That they are older is simply a popular illusion.—ED.]



This was Stoddart, and his poem, published in Edinburgh in 1831, was called *The Death Wake, a Necromaunt, in Three Chimeras!* This astonishing performance was the first appearance of the wildly sensational class of poetry which culminated in *Balder*, and the effect, at least on me, was simply one of contempt. It could have no evil influence in the way of producing imitators, but as an indication of despair as respected legitimate art it was perplexing.

The name of William Weir reminds me of his nephew Kennedy, beside whom I happened to sit in the Antique Class at the Trustees' Gallery, where my father before me had begun his studies. Sir William Allan was my master there: a genial and kindly hard-headed man who had travelled in Russia and Turkey, bringing home new subjects for pictures; not a great painter, but very attentive to us students. My nearest neighbour on one hand, drawing from the Fighting Gladiator, with all the ways and all the aids of an amateur, was Kennedy, who made a very considerable impression in London a few years later when I too was making a beginning there. He had then returned from Italy, and in cultivation and natural powers as well, was, I thought, superior to any of those I knew who were pushing past him. However, he, like these others,—O'Neil, Frith, Egg, and the rest,—depended on getting into the Royal Academy, and failing to do so, he became discouraged and inactive, and has been altogether forgotten. This is the history of so many; without getting into



the Academy, men of moderate ability were unable to hold their ground, except indeed water-colour painters.

My neighbour on the other hand in the Antique Class for a whole season was a very different character: a man gifted by nature and born to master circumstances. He was apprentice to a decorative house-painter, but by his own determination, not a determination to leave his branch of trade but to cultivate his taste, had qualified himself to find admission to the Trustees' School of Art. Scotland is the country where self-education abounds, and where mental powers in all walks of life assert themselves in spite of fate or fortune. He was shy towards his fellow-students, but nearly always had books in his pockets or lying beside him, both of which peculiarities attracted me to him, notwithstanding the powerful odour of oil-paint. Finding he walked homeward the same way as myself, we were quickly friends and confidants. This was James Ballantine. By and by he produced his poetry, which was in the vernacular, like Burns's: a choice of language which has been an insurmountable barrier to every one else, so far as a cultivated public is concerned. He afterwards published a novel or two, descriptive of the national character, and, as a glass-painter, was entrusted with the production of the windows for the House of Lords in the new Houses of Parliament. About that time David Roberts, whose beginnings were exactly similar to Ballantine's, began scene-painting in the Edinburgh theatre,

and when he ended his career, still a scene-painter but a very masterly one, Ballantine wrote his biography.

I gravitated into art as a profession—landscape art at first—almost without consideration, by force of circumstances. The only profession independent of my family interests I thought of was medicine, and that only as an anatomist. I joined the old Royal Physical Society of Edinburgh, Captain Brown¹ being my introducer. I found my way sometimes into the class-rooms of Dr. Knox and of the University, but going to the Infirmary with a surgical friend to witness an amputation, I found myself unable to stand the spectacle. After distinguishing myself by fainting I was not so anxious to pursue the study; besides, the Burke and Hare horrors broke up Knox. It being necessary for some one of us to take my invalided father's place, I gradually found myself divided between two occupations: attending to his extensive business and cultivating painting. Not that my father was satisfied that either my elder brother or myself should adopt painting as a profession. He had seen too many poor painters; he knew none other, indeed, except Raeburn and the portrait-painters; and he knew that the ablest artists in London in his earlier time—Stothard, Fuseli, Smirke—lived on an annual income scarcely credible nowadays. So he insisted on our beginning by acquiring his art of engraving, which I followed my

¹ Thomas Brown, my father's early pupil (see p. 45), was now president of this earliest chartered scientific Edinburgh society.

brother David in doing. He had years ago emancipated himself, and was now in Rome.

Etching and engraving had no difficulties for me. I forthwith thought to show him I had mastered the matter by engraving a large landscape. A picture by Thomson, the clerical amateur, who had at once gone ahead of all the Scottish professors of landscape—a picture called “the Martyrs’ Tombs,” being some graves of Covenanters in a wild mountain region,—had made a sensation. He lent me this picture, and when my engraving was finished I took a proof to Professor Wilson and asked if I might place a dedication to him under it. This, I fancied, would be a pretty wind-up to my indebtedness to him. He was very pleased. “But, you know,” he added to his assent, “I am a decided Tory: I might have been on the Claverhouse and Dalziel side in the fight. I might have thought they deserved all they got for having the impertinence to worship God in their own way!”

While at work on this large plate I used to walk out to visit the minister, and sit by him while painting; the road round Arthur’s Seat to the manse being very pleasant and convenient for me. Turner was at that time often in Scotland, sketching for the *Provincial Antiquities* and other works, to which Thomson also contributed; and when he appeared that season he was invited to dine at the manse to meet some of the elder artists. To this dinner the minister kindly invited me, a beginner of twenty or so. The clerical painter had unbounded

admiration of Turner's art; at the same time he laughed good-humouredly at the man and at the anecdotes then current, to which he added others from his own intercourse. "Cockneyism" was at this time the prevailing subject of Edinburgh ridicule, not in literature merely, but in social life; and the particular anecdote I still remember best in the clerical repertory as affording an indication of the dwarfed cultivation and style of talk of the great adept related to a drawing he had done, I believe, for the south coast scenery. It was a view of a distant river, with a greyhound at full speed after a hare in the foreground. Thomson was examining this drawing with admiration when Turner called out, "Ah! I see you want to know why I have introduced that 'are. It is a bit of sentiment, sir! for that's the spot where 'Arold 'Arefoot fell, and you see I have made an 'ound a-chasing an 'are!" When he appeared at dinner somebody had brought him in a carriage, and when he had to go at night, that person having left early, Thomson had to find some other friend to frank him back to town.

Francis Grant was one of the guests. It was the day of Reform Bill agitation, and Grant said he had been nearly mobbed in town on his way. "But it was the aristocratic horse I rode, no doubt, that attracted attention," he quickly added, fearing the chaff that was coming; for Turner, as soon as any, saw through the man. Grant had already taken a studio in London, and Turner pretended to know exactly the locality he described. "I know the

werry place," said he ; "it's where the bear-gardens used to be"—a rather impertinent joke which some of the company laughed at, looking upon Grant as an amateur whom self-confidence and the "aristocratic horse" only would carry through. Had any one prophesied that that animal would carry him up to the President's Chair of the Academy, he would have been declared to libel that institution. Another portrait-painter was there, Macnee, afterwards Sir Daniel, President of the Royal Scottish Academy, then obscure enough. A gossiping anecdote like this, of a long past year, is a small matter ; but if the intervening years, with success and the exhaustless rhetoric of a popular writer, have lifted a veil from one of the characters and made him historical, it may be worth recording.

CHAPTER VIII

FRIENDSHIP—THE ST. LUKE'S CLUB—THE "EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY SOUVENIR"

THE first impulse of affection outside those of the family is of course that of the sexes towards each other, which begins in infancy, perhaps a little later in the male. It appears in both sexes almost as soon as the child can walk, and before it has any motives consciously known to itself. Nor has it much to do with the castles in the air we begin so early to build. We masculine creatures can believe no evil of the possessor of the pretty face of feminine innocence—nay, we accept it as indicative of all good; the delusion has an ideal character, and is in proportion to the beauty, or the qualities that affect us as beauty. This juvenile affection is so exclusively the property of the individual that it is uninteresting to every one else, and yet how overwhelmingly charming it is. The sister's little companions, brought together to be entertained with curds and milk, sitting in a row in the garden, affect the little brother in an unspeakable way. When too shy to join them he looks on from a distance, fancies they

are speaking of him, and sometimes makes a selection of one who immediately, in some wonderful way reading his face, understands the predilection.

These little white clouds rise and set when the sky of childhood is blue and calm. A year or two passes; the boy sees a face in church, and every Sunday, for many seasons it may be, looks for her, goes to church in the hope of seeing her. Perhaps he never knows more of her; or if occasion serves he musters courage, and it is instantly revealed to him that she is and can be nothing to him: the very tone of a voice may be antipathetic.

Friendship is altogether different. It comes later, it has nothing to do with the colour of the hair or the shape of the nose. Many men, the majority of men, never feel at all any drawing together, except as some accidental interest or common study makes intercourse agreeable. For myself, one absorbing and all-sacrificing passion of friendship has followed another through my life. But for friendship there is no marriage to fix and perpetuate the relation: men diverge, and different experiences change their possibilities and proclivities, sympathies even change, so that any friendships save those founded on common sense and moderate affinities of taste come at last to be numbered among the delusions and compromises of life.

The first of my friends was William Shand, whom I now met at the annual dinner, 1832-33, of the St. Luke's Club. The second was Thomas Sibson, whom I first met in London. Both of

them have died without leaving their mark. The third was Gabriel Rossetti, who has been much to me for many years.

To the club dinner I have spoken of I went with Steell the sculptor, now Sir John, my brother having by that time been more than a year in Rome. On the opposite side of the table sat a youth of my own age, whose eyes I found bent on me more than once, as indeed I was so fascinated by him I could not forbear observing him. Every day nearly from that evening till I left Edinburgh for London we met, and very frequently sat far into the night, indulging in the habits of the time and place, with endless bitter beer and whisky toddy. He had taken his degree of M.A. in Aberdeen at the age of nineteen, and had now only to become a licentiate of the Church, which he never accomplished. The dark angel of doubt had entered his mind, the small nucleus of the cancer ; the proud and conscientious man would not affirm that he believed any creed. He was moreover possessed of all the erratic desire of experience and of the enthusiasm that mark the conqueror as much as the martyr. But to be either, the seeker must find faith, he must build upon a rock, and that my dearly-beloved Shand never did.

Just at this time came the end of my obligations to Christopher North. I had become thoroughly initiated in the poetry of Shelley, Keats, and Leigh Hunt, and found all and each more congenial to me than that of Wordsworth, Scott, and Southey. Besides, the great change that takes place in men of

strong individuality at the period of transition from boyhood to manhood, in their opinions on all great and general questions, had arrived. The three watchwords of the French Revolution, that made the French arms invincible for a time, were my watchwords; I read every book from a new point of view, and read much, from Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary*, a book which preceded the convulsion, to Godwin's *Political Justice*, which came out of it. I accepted the modern philosophic interpretation of the fable of Prometheus worked up by Shelley, but I did not and could not appreciate (as indeed criticism has from first to last avoided analytical and elucidatory treatment of his opinions) his predilection for the dynastic habit of the ancient Egyptians, which made his father think of shutting him up; nor did I perceive that his revenge against that "guardian by the accident of nature" had made him choose the foul subject of the Cenci for a tragedy.

The last attempts I took to Wilson were a sort of ballad called "The Burgher of Limoges," treating the massacre there perpetrated by the Black Prince from a moral or modern political point of view, and a long octo-syllabic story called *Anthony*, which was afterwards entirely remodelled and published. He was curious to know why I had taken the incident so damaging to the Black Prince for the subject of a poem, and did not like it. In the other more important poem he lit upon the word *abysm*, made in a moment of rhythmical difficulty to rhyme with *gleam*, giving the word the French sound, which he

at once noticed. My evil genius prompted me to say I had found the word *abysm* so pronounced by Shelley: an assertion which was either a mistake or a fib, as I cannot find any such pronunciation in Shelley's poetry; on the contrary, in "Prometheus" he makes *abysm* rhyme with *prism*. This reference to Shelley roused the lion in a moment; he turned upon me that head—the most heroical to be seen in a generation of men—and vented a tirade against license of all sorts, and against Shelley and all his ways, that was almost frightful.

Very lately, only a year or two ago from the day of the present writing, quite unintentionally, by relating this anecdote to Carlyle, I met with a similar outburst from that eccentric hater of eccentricity. Not so violent perhaps, nor impulsive, Shelley having been dead these sixty years; but even more vituperative and scarifying, treating Shelley as a dog whose life ought to have been beaten out of him. Carlyle had never realised the fact that the poet's social, political, and religious convictions were those of a boy rather than of a man, and were to him a gospel: a new gospel of promise, somewhat the same as our gospel of salvation was to the Christians of the catacombs.

For myself, I may now say, I believe his wisdom or his unwisdom will ultimately determine the fame and the acceptance of a poet who has any ethical or teaching significance. It must be so. Indeed the great poet must be a great thinker, the noble poet must have a noble nature; his heart must be

sounder and his head healthier than any other heart or head if our poetry is not to degenerate into mere amusement like a Christmas pantomime.¹

To return to my narrative. The professor kept the poem. The word which had irritated him expunged, he would think of it for "the Magazine." It never appeared, and in the meantime I wrote a piece full of a sort of dithyrambic laudation on P. B. Shelley, which appeared in *Tait's Monthly Magazine* in 1832, I think.

My new friend Shand was the centre of a coterie of students, associated by literary tastes as much as by position; they being all students, growing probationers of the Church, and several of them writers of verse. In this circle it was determined to publish a book at Christmas like the then fashionable annuals, without illustrations indeed, or with only one etched by me, but with literature such as we, assembling at Shand's lodging,—a luminous constellation,—should invent for the occasion. This little volume, called *The Edinburgh University Souvenir*, was published in October 1834, after hard work on the parts of Shand and myself, because most of the others nearly

¹ I say this, at the same time acknowledging that the imaginative and rhythmical faculties born with a man will continue him in a high, but not in the highest, place as a poet. Carlyle's hatred of Shelley was purely a hatred of the man, not of the poet; but Wilson's was more difficult to understand, because he was the writer of the reviews of Shelley's *Revolt of Islam* in Blackwood in 1819, also of *Alastor* and *Prometheus Unbound*, in all of which he was treated with some praise, and not at all in the spirit of *The Viper's* ribaldry on the Cockney school. Perhaps in these criticisms to myself he followed his manner to a boy, he being the Professor of Moral Philosophy, and in the habit of meeting aspiring boys like myself.

broke down or fought shy of the exploit, which was so entirely a coterie undertaking that none of the professors were invited to patronise it, and some offers of aid from some medical students were rejected. Some years afterwards I heard from Dr. Samuel Brown, then, I believe, one of these medical youths, that a very stern eye of observation had been cast on William Shand and his rather exclusive circle, with their rather noisy evenings, and on the *University Souvenir*, into which no symptom of college studies, particularly of the theological sort, had been allowed to enter. When I got acquainted with Leigh Hunt I found he knew the book ; thought so much of it, indeed, that he said it should have been well known and "accepted all over the country."

Except Shand and myself and my brother David, who contributed a sketch called "A Dream in my Studio," written in Rome, the other writers, only three or four in all, were, in spite of gossip, wholly untouched by scepticism. One of them, Macdowell, became professor of oriental languages in the Queen's College, Belfast ; and another, J. C. Fairbairn, spent his life as a much-beloved minister in a parish in Berwickshire, and was selected by the Free Kirk General Assembly to visit Switzerland officially to establish there a congregation in connection with the Free Kirk of Scotland. He was an able letter-writer, and for many years indulged his friends by that talent, and I shall transcribe here one of his letters describing his first and second sermons. It is, I think, highly worth preservation. It was

written to me in London within a year after my leaving Edinburgh.

MY DEAR W. B. S.—I will give you my experiences in exchange for yours : a curious exchange—yours from the busiest, mine from the quietest of places and lives. You know I am now a licentiate of the Kirk, and may travel about to preach, qualified by law, not to trade like Autolycus, but to preach and pray in parish pulpits when invited, as popularly recognised as the worthy named.


My first effort in this office—rather trying, you know—was in the small chapel of the Trinity Hospital, about fifty feet long by twenty. It was the evening service, and a prodigious fire opposite me made the gas-lights look pale, and shone startlingly on the bald heads and white caps of the old men and women below me, also on the gilt letters on the black boards, records of donations to the charity, on either wall. You will suppose there could be nothing easier than addressing such an audience in such a place. I had selected both ; thought it would be so comfortable ; but I did not find it so, in fact I felt I was undertaking the great calling and the public act of prayer. Yet I was perfectly calm.

My first sermon was preached at Culross. That Sunday morning in the manse I rose fresh, cool, and confident, a state of mind and body which left me at the door of the church ; and when I followed the beadle up the path between the pews filled with people all looking at me, and was finally shut into the pulpit, I could not resist an attack of shivering. There was a tremendous gale blowing that made the whole building tremble, so I had to raise my voice to make myself heard at all, and this gave me confidence ; I felt myself contending with the elements. I was not alone and in silence ! I got through pretty well.

The second course in the afternoon was very much easier : I felt quite secure. Dinner over, I mounted the minister's pony, and addressed myself towards the ferry. The road lay along the shore, sometimes close to the

waves, sometimes inland, with tall trees on either side, the broken branches of which strewed the road. The wind was the strongest I ever encountered ; once or twice I was in danger of being dismounted, but I rejoiced in it mightily, shouted and sang, or tried to sing, not Shand's toping song, you may believe, but Luther's hymn, "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott." The moon was sometimes out, and again the careering darkness swept over her, adding to my enjoyment till I reached the inn, and found mine host and an old navy man sitting over their liquor, to whose company I was right welcome, and soon had the warmest seat at the side of the chimney.

This innkeeper is a decent man and an old friend, as I have lived a couple of months more than once at a house not far off, and used to get a boat here or go out with the fishermen. You who can't bear the sea can't imagine my present life here. Some days the water is like glass, a yellow haze over it and the sky, the sails of other boats of the fishing-fleet only lighter yellow, with quivering reflections. Such days you might envy ; but my enjoyment is on board a boat of thirty tons shooting through the seething brine, crowded with sail—main, gaff-top, jib, foresail, and a graceful mizzen rigged up on the stern : with all her bravery on, in a word—and who's afraid ? Now, her mainsail is jibbed ; she is moving erect through the swell, the wind following like a wolf, but harmless. This is what Coleridge calls "steady with upright keel." Then you hear the helmsman call out, "Helm a-lee !" the main is tackled, the jib close-hauled upon the weather side—"Fill !"—then instantly the foresail is shifted ; the ship, hitherto moving straight before the wind, is thrown upon her beams, her leeward gunwale level with the sea, leaving the waves to climb wildly, but innocently, her windward side, and thump like hammers at her ribs. The sense of command in this action is prodigiously fine : a creak, a whish of block and cordage, an oblique throw of canvas, a momentary tremble and a plunge, and the boat glides safely along, leaving behind her a track of foam.



There is a very ancient church on this coast which has outlived its village. It is embowered in trees—trees even growing among the neglected tombstones. I came there last Saturday. The stillness was thorough from the horizon to the tree-tops. Two masons were the only living things near ; they were chipping, re-cutting the inscription on a stone, and adding another name. They were not doing their work in any hurry, stretching their limbs on the brown autumnal grass in the green twilight. The scene and the incident had an unspeakable sentiment—and yet why unspeakable?—unspeakable only to me ; perhaps you could have articulated it. I shall make a water-colour sketch of it.—Yours, my dear friend,

J. C. F.

The toping song mentioned in this letter is not a favourable specimen of my dear friend Shand's poetry, yet I should like to transcribe it here, and so preserve it from the destruction that is to overtake all the papers I am using as helps or materials for my present writing. Letters only I shall keep, in evidence of correctness. The verses were nearly improvised to suit an occasion.

A HOLIDAY SONG

WE sat within the browning wood,
 Beneath the oldest tree,
With meat and drink, good Burgundy,
 Merry as truants be.
Here we can chirp like grasshoppers,
 Said one unto the other,
I am a heedless man to-day,
 And you shall be my brother.

First by there came a countryman,
In stupid, wandering mood,
"Please, masters, can you point the way
That leads out of the wood?"—
"What matters that,—see, here's a can
Of smoking wine for thee,"
He quaffed, and danced to make us mirth
Beneath the brown oak tree.

Next by there came a patriarch,
With years his back was bent,
Right thin his cheek, and scant his breath,
Upon his staff he leant :
"For that best virtue, Charity,
Boys, help an ancient man."
"With all my heart," quoth I, and so
I helped him to a can.

Next by there came a friar glib,
Who from his scrip did reach
Relics and beads and trumpery,
Our happy souls to breach.
Quoth I, "This is no time to prate,
Put up your mumbles, man";
And so he did—he saw that Dick
Was reaching him a can.

Thus all day long we drank and sang
Beneath that blessed tree,
And still we had been singing there,—
I speak in verity,—
But that the liquor failed at last,
And sad was every man ;
He could not to his neighbour say
Let's drink another can.

CHAPTER IX

LEAVING EDINBURGH

My association with this set of young men, all students of theology attending college except myself, was the result of the overpowering affection existing between the leader of the coterie and myself. Such a coterie I should think never existed before and never has existed since, the general training of the men aspiring to the ministry of the Kirk being more closely restricted than that of the students in medicine or law. As to the beloved Shand, in our most intimate cogitations we avoided the subject of religion, but in planning for the future, in scheming how we should be free to live always together, his professional prospects could not be ignored. We once thought of each demanding his portion like the prodigal son, and going off together to a Norwegian fiord, where solitude and cheap living were to be found. I had versified from literal or Latin translations some Norse pieces; we would make all the sagas and northern stories and poetry known to the English public. Other schemes we had more like the

schemes of children than of men. In the meantime, the day of his examination to qualify him as a licentiate preacher arrived. He was nowhere to be found.

At this moment of fevering unrest, we heard of De Quincey being located within the debtors' sanctuary of Holyrood. He was to be seen like the ghost of one whose body had not received the clod of earth to entitle it to rest in peace, and his growing son, it was reported, was getting well into his teens like an uncared-for dog. Whether this was so or not, I cannot venture to say,¹—I believe the boy died before manhood,—but Shand wrote a letter to De Quincey expressive of the admiration he felt for the best living writer of English, and offering to give his son all the educational aid in classics necessary to relieve him of any responsibility. It was the little book then not long published, *The Confessions of an Opium Eater*, that prompted this, and that besides brought upon us a crisis that might have summarily severed us. De Quincey's praise of the drug, "O mighty, just, and subtle opium," that drove us into the folly of imitation, I have found since to have its prototype in a passage near the end of Sir Walter Raleigh's *History of the World*, where he eulogises the end of things as "Eloquent, just, and mighty Death." To some constitutions opium is entirely antipathetic, and haply with us it seemed so, but

¹ [It is now known that there was much exaggeration in the current gossip.—ED.]

we went on adding to the quantity we consumed, and also absorbing a drug we were more accustomed to, the "wine of the country," till my friend went into a comatose state, out of which he could not be roused. All night long I sat by him, and into the next day, when he came to himself and the punishment was mitigated. He got well, and his offer to De Quincey was never even answered.¹

But the time was in the ordinary and wholly unromantic course of things approaching when our ways of life led us apart. The easy descent to the avenues of dissipation was visible; his family began to look after him. As to myself, I had humoured my father by learning engraving; not only that, but had in his bad state of health taken the irksome labours of his business off his hands; but I began to see that I was to become the family victim, and so to remain. I fancied myself like Ovid's sacrificial heifer—

Praevisos in aqua timet hostia cultros,

and I determined not to accept the fate, but to break away. An opportunity to do this came. Brother Robert returned suddenly from the West Indies; he would take my place in business at least, and I would take the road south famous to all

¹ I think it necessary to say in relation to this proposal of my hero and friend Shand, and of De Quincey's neglect of it, that I know Shand wrote without any personal knowledge of De Quincey's domestic affairs or of his son; and that he was as precipitate in action and as little liable to reason as the Opium-Eater himself. The youth must have been the son who died in 1835, at the age of seventeen.

Scotchmen—I would go to London. This resolution I put into effect in the spring of 1837.

The day before we were to part, my dear friend Shand and I walked down to the sea-shore, and gravitated to a little inn well known to us at New-haven, with a room opening on the shingle, a place where fish dinners were approved of by many. Here we dined, and afterwards we called a number of boys, fishermen's children, to the open window. I ought to have said that Shand too had already formed a plan of leaving home ; he had an offer to go to St. Petersburg as a tutor. So we called these juvenile fishermen to the window and made them drink the health of the Czar, and of the baroness he was to serve, till some of them subsided into a state of quiescence, and we were at last lucky to escape by the connivance of the landlord from the irate natives.

The advice of Professor Wilson, that I should turn to subjects nearer home and write from my own experience, impressed me, though it was unpalatable at the time, because there was a lunatic infection then in the poetical atmosphere producing not only the *Death-Wake*, ridiculously called "a Necromant," but also *The Wondrous Tale of Alroy*, the astonishing and altogether exceptional poem *Festus*, and a little later *Balder*. In obedience to this poetical fever in the air I was already incubating *The Year of the World*, my grandiose contribution to the philosophy of the age. But I also began to draw on my own experience.

To all my theological friends, and to myself above them all, the most sacred thing in nature was woman : virginity was the ideal, not in one sex only, but in both ; without purity was there no love of a noble kind. This sentiment, which Christianity has developed in history, is, I fancy, natural to all of us at a certain age ; to me it was a wall of adamant, invisible, but of absolute power of moral defence. I say this that there may be no question about my relation to a girl I met on the street one night. She was dressed out in the manner of her class, but she was evidently new to the street and harmless. She looked at me in fact with an honest, ingenuous expression which perplexed and fascinated me. I addressed her, and we walked along, talking of I know not what ; only she talked like any other woman, and not, as I expected or feared, like one abandoned by society, till she asked if I would give her some supper.

We adjourned to a place she knew, a kind of restaurant. I had not then read Goethe's *Bayadere*, nor Beranger, nor any other French moralist either in verse or prose, and I was astonished to find this young woman, who was my own age, but who had already played out at least the first act of her drama, was not transformed, but was still a woman with a little of the child. I tried to learn her history, but, like Canning's Knifegrinder, she had none to tell, sir. She had a pretty name, Rosabell Bonally, and came from the little village of that name in the vicinity of the city,—probably of French origin, a

colony of French weavers having settled near Edinburgh, and called the district Picardy, a name still applied to it. She was wholly uneducated, and had no faith but in a sort of fatalism. She had fallen into bad hands. "What could I do?" she asked; "what maun be, maun" (what must be, must). A little ham left over from our repast she wrapped in a handkerchief, a clean one, saying she had not too much to eat always, and made me promise to meet her again.

I did meet her again and again, but I saw I could do her no good. So instead of seeing her, I made a history for her as one of the doomed: a recitative in parts, with occasional songs. This was one of the manuscripts I had in my portmanteau, cherished possessions, on leaving for London—this "Rosabell," afterwards altered to "Mary Anne," along with "Anthony," "Four Acts of St. Cuthbert," and others.

This was not my first appearance in the metropolis. In 1831 or 1832 I had drawn in the British Museum. Already steamboats were in use, but the old expert sailing vessels were still plying, and I went in one of these. Smacks they were called, and were supposed to be wondrous swift; but as contrary winds followed by a dead calm would have it, we were two weeks and two days on the sea. This second voyage southward was in a steamboat, but the weather was so bad we put into Hull, and once out of the steamboat nothing would induce me to enter it again. By the mail coach, I

and a friend accompanying me passed through Lincoln, Peterborough, and Cambridge, hard work of two days and nights before arriving at the Belle Sauvage.

The difference of travelling between then and now was still greater abroad. Next year I went to Paris with my brother David, who wanted to examine again the pictures of the French classic school. We necessarily took the great lumbering diligence, and were soon as white as millers by the dust. In the yards of the baiting places where the horses were changed stood a row of chairs supporting basins of water for washing, brushes, and other means of cleansing, more prized by the passengers than any other refreshment.

What did I expect, now at twenty-five to twenty-six leaving my family circle and making a home in London, without any fortune? I cannot now help wondering at my temerity. Far from quick or precocious, I wanted social as much as professional training. What a man new to London requires first is acquaintance with what is going on, and insight into it to teach him what is wanted to make success; and secondly, having the ability as well as the will to supply the article. Peculiar genius of any sort is about the last thing wanted. At first he must try to serve, not command. What could a shy youth with poetry in his pockets, and little knowledge of the world and himself, expect? The difference between what one can do best and what one likes to do, and what one must do, is too

dreadful! Barry Cornwall, who hated the salt water so much he would not even cross the Channel, wrote the song :

I'm on the Sea ! I'm on the Sea !
I am where I would ever be ;

which, however, is one of the best of songs. "'Tis a pity to play a game with hollow nuts for a stake of hollow nuts," says Jarno to Wilhelm when he finds him following the fortunes of the strolling players. It was, rather than any other motive, a desire to take the plunge, to meet my fate among the central interests of London, that brought me there. I found the truth of Jarno's saying, yet I stayed. I met my fate in the person of my future wife, and obstacles were as nothing to me.

CHAPTER X

ART AND ARTISTS IN LONDON—MY FIRST EXPERI- ENCES—VARLEY THE ASTROLOGER

ULTIMATELY I shall write very shortly about my own personality, but for a little space egotism must be excused. I lived very economically; for a time my reading cost me about as much as my living: my expenses in the practice of painting were most to be provided for. This was the day of elaborate engraving in Annuals, some very little plates for these costing £100 or even £150 each. I thought if I could introduce among publishers the rapid "painter's etching," now, while I write, become so popular, my father's teaching might turn out a fortune to me. So I etched a series of eight illustrations to a quarto volume of moderate poetic pretensions called *Landscape Lyrics* which had come in my way. These excited extraordinary attention, I may say, but the taste of the moment is all-important, and I had no material success. Still I did not give up the attempt to introduce the "painter's etching" to the publishing world. At Christmas I designed a carol. It was foolscap

size, with the Virgin in glory at the top of the decorative sheet, and below the verses ran down the page between small illustrations opposite each, a mediæval boar's head dinner-party filling up the base. This I could get no publisher to venture to issue; it was said to be papistical, carols were said to have become vulgar, to be going out, and so on. At last one offered to try it. I had the satisfaction of seeing it in sundry windows exposed for sale, but not a shilling was forthcoming. My next venture was a far more serious one. Avoiding papistry, I took the Civil War for the subject of a series of small water-colour pictures, and these I etched most carefully on steel. The first was the royal court at Hampton, and various subjects brought the story up to the decisive fight when Rupert's dragoons fell before the Ironsides; the concluding picture being Cromwell and his daughters at Hampton Court, a contrast with the first. These were the ablest things I had done, but their failure to find a publisher was so complete that I gave up the attempt, and turned more seriously to painting.

It was not, however, to be landscape any longer. That branch of art was at that time below zero in London. The greatest landscape painter in the world was painting "The Casting of the Iron Duke," and "The Jew of Venice" shaking a pair of scales out of the window of a gamboge house, and was the joke of the public. Constable was near his end and never a favourite, and the only other landscape painter pure and simple was Creswick,

a mild practitioner, who somehow had the power of managing everything, so that Linnell, Linton, Mark Antony, and others, were never heard of, and scarcely exhibited at the Academy.

Besides, my "Cavalier and Puritan" set of designs, though they had been a dreadful loss to me both of time and expense, had got me a considerable repute among painters; and there was rising a new and interesting school of historical and, loosely speaking, inventive and illustrative painters which withdrew my attention from the less attractive, but to me more refined, landscape. Maclise had taken his natural place as the most inventive designer and ablest draftsman of England, and a swarm of other men who were all shortly known to me were acquiring habits of study unknown to the previous generation. Costume and architecture were already a hundred times better understood than even a few years before. This change had been visible in Edinburgh in the hands of my brother, Thomas Duncan, R. S. Lauder, and others, and in London it was apparently absorbing all the rising talent of the day. It was the beginning of a movement, apparently unknown to Haydon, Howard, Etty, and Eastlake, in whose hands history and poetry, so called, then lay, but which led within a very few years to the great question of the employment of the arts in the adornment of the new Houses of Parliament.

Among these, the most interesting men of the art world of the moment, I ambitiously determined

to try my powers; and the first picture of considerable size and amount of study I accomplished was "The Old English Ballad Singer," which, much to my satisfaction, was purchased by a Mr. Pater-noster, though at a moderate price, all prices then being distinguished by such moderation that it was barely possible to live on the proceeds of very assiduous labour.¹ Shortly afterwards Mr. S. C. Hall and Mr. Howe the publisher began the illustrated *Book of Ballads*, and my "Ballad Singer" figured in the beginning of the book as a heading to the preface. At Hall's house, all the young men I have called the "rising talent" were to be met once a week: a house filled with little pictures, or sketches for larger ones, which he had got in exchange for praise—a fair exchange we may say, but one which did not please both sides, so that his house, "The Rosery," became popularly known as "The roguery." He was an amiable man, and his wife had certain charms of a well-conserved kind, but he suffered from the prevailing disease of impecuniosity, which indeed afflicted almost every human creature I met in that long eight years' experience of the London world: every one, I mean, connected with the business of the arts! This painful disease, and the difficulty of getting works favourably seen by the public, made the life of the

¹ The well-known sentence of Sir Philip Sidney, wherein he says that a poor *crowder* singing Chevy Chase "could rouse him more than the sound of a trumpet," gave the hint for the subject. The scene was the market cross of a small town, and a great many figures were assembled on the canvas.

young artist at once humiliating and precarious. Now, all Bond Street is an exhibition gallery, besides many other thoroughfares; then, there was but one, for oil-paintings and water-colours as well, of unquestionable advantage, *i.e.* the Academy, which was reputed to employ a system of keep-him-down up to the very day of a man's election into the body. The suspense during the weeks of hanging the pictures under this régime was not very pleasant, and none but members were allowed to see their works before the public were admitted. At last a touching-up day was set apart for the outsiders, when Turner distinguished himself by saying that now at last the Royal Academy was ruined! This indicates the spirit then abroad.

Besides the Academy, there was the British Institution in Pall Mall for oil pictures: a small gallery, but with a grenadier armed with fixed bayonet mounting guard at the door. This institution was supported by a body of superannuated private subscribers, none of whom took a sufficient interest in the modern exhibitions to prevent the keeper being the autocrat of the exhibition. This man had a son a frame-maker, and access to the walls of the rooms, or to the good places thereon, was said to be through the shop of the frame-maker! The Suffolk Street Society of British Artists then existed, but it was, under the circumstances mentioned before, the retreat for the ill-used art of landscape. The water-colour societies were exclusive bodies.

My "Old English Ballad Singer" was exhibited at the British Institution.

I have called the young men I quickly began to know—Dadd, O'Neil, Frith, Egg, and Joy—aspirants to historical painting, but they largely followed the illustrative habits of the previous twenty years, the popular subjects being mainly taken from *Gil Blas*, *Don Quixote*, and the *Vicar of Wakefield*. The Scotchmen in London I then knew—R. S. Lauder, M'Innes, Alexander Johnstone, and others—occupied themselves much in the same manner, only taking the Waverley Novels and the *Gentle Shepherd* as their themes. It is impossible to say that this society was exhilarating or even amusing; apart from "the shop" indeed—and in professional questions reticence was rather too visible—conversation could scarcely be said to exist. It was a society of rivals; there were too many for the chances of success, too many for the small amount of fame and fortune to be divided among them, the emoluments of painters being at that time small, collectors few, and prices low, perhaps not a tenth part of the prices now given even to the younger men.

One bond of union existed among them, however, which was their extreme desire to increase the power of exhibiting their pictures, and to mitigate the tyranny of the Academy. If I remember right, my first introduction to some of the ablest among them was a summons to a meeting for the purpose of establishing an exhibition, or some other new plan of enabling us to come before the public. At the

first meeting Richard Dadd was in the chair, and Frith, Egg, Lucas, with a number of landscape painters, were assembled, and I find still existing a circular in a pretty feminine hand, dated mysteriously from the British Coffee House, Cockspur Street, 26th October 1841, to this effect: "The Committee beg to remind Mr. Scott that the meeting for the consideration of their Report respecting a new Exhibition is fixed for Saturday next, 30th inst., when Mr. Scott's attendance is earnestly requested. The chair will be taken at 7 o'clock precisely." All the years of my London practice until I left in 1844, such attempts to organise new exhibiting societies were constantly being made by young men struggling to get their innings before their time.

Besides those whose names I have given, who were essentially of the same amount of cultivation and standing, as well as age, there were others of a rather higher class and greater age, some of whom I knew. The best of these was Poole, who was possessed of a strong individuality, a man of peculiar powers of mind and vivid perceptions, entering into everything with as much interest as into his own affairs. He was a man with a strain of the savage in his blood, however, and a good hater, with other qualities allied to genius. His picture of "The Plague," but for the figure of Solomon Eagle with the pan of fire strapped to his shoulders, a poor invention of Defoe's, was a work to take a permanent place among our greater English pictures. Another was E. M. Ward, a large person, overbearing if permitted,

and given to pantomimic imitation of his associates. I remember Wornum, my intimate friend to the end of his life, turning from him without recognition when we met him on the street, and when I inquired the reason Wornum said, "That fellow took to imitate me at the Greco till the very waiters grinned, and I had to drop going at all." Besides these, there were many who were little heard of until the Westminster Hall Competition brought them into notice. Ward, I think, did his very best, which every one does not accomplish ; he was a matter-of-fact painter, although with plenty of conventional dramatic incident in his invention, and the right kind of execution to express what he wanted.

None of all the men mentioned except Maclise, whose two pictures in the Houses of Parliament, "Wellington and Blucher at Waterloo" and "Nelson on board of the *Victory*," are the greatest war pictures perhaps ever painted in the world, can, I think, be said to have been anything more than professional experts, although Poole possessed poetic insight, and Frith will be much thought of in some future day because he has illustrated the age in which we live, so that his pictures will remain valuable as far as they are true, while they will also be admired for their charming execution. As Hogarth's scenes are for ever authoritative, so in a lesser degree will be Frith's ; but in a lesser degree only, as our pictorial newspapers now narrow the field for the painter in this respect. I do not therefore consider myself arrogant in now saying, long

after the personal daily interest I might ever have followed has passed away, that I do not think I under-estimate the intercourse I then had with the set immediately surrounding me by saying I was rather glad to be done with it when the day and opportunity came. At the same time it is possible my undefined character as poet, etcher, and even critic might with some of them have stood in the way of freedom of intercourse.

This puts me in mind that artists who were not so much painters as illustrators of books were really more congenial to me. Among these Kenny Meadows afforded us much amusement. He was the most amiable of men; to make the present moment pass pleasantly was everything to him. He had been about town since childhood, when he was sent up to an uncle in London, his only remembrance of his father being that of a forefinger which that worthy used to give the child trotting beside him on the country road. Since then all the actors from the Kembles down, and painters from Lawrence, were known to him. At the time I speak of there existed a Garrick Club, to which he took me, where I first saw the Landseers, Douglas Jerrold, Blanchard, and others, who seemed all preternaturally shrewd and sharp, and initiated in some mental freemasonry I could not enter.

Meadows liked little evening entertainments, when his Shakespearian quotations came to the surface. Dr. Caius's "There's pippins and cheese to come," or "Now come in the sweets of the night!"

when grog appeared, were always welcome, though somewhat too well known, and almost looked for. When my "Old English Ballad Singer" was finished he looked at it all over, dropped his eyeglass, and said, "Now I daresay you think yourself a very clever fellow to paint so good a picture, don't you? But it is nothing to paint a picture compared to what it is to sell it. When you do that I'll congratulate you." One of the studio puns we have all heard since was, I think, originally his. The talk about fresco and the palette proper to it, a palette of earths, tired him out: "You talk of ochres, but the worst of all you have not named, though it is the commonest—that's the mediocre!"—"Then," I answered him, "you don't believe in the golden mean being the best of things."—"No, no, I'll divide that with you; you may take the mean, and I will keep the gold."

One day when I called upon him in his small back drawing-room, where he painted his water-colour heads for Heath's *Annals*, and drew on the engraver's wood-blocks with a hard pencil, I found him looking meditatively at two drawings on his easel representing Mrs. Page and Anne. "What do you think of these now as a pair—mother and daughter?" Of course I gave them praise. "Well," he went on, "I have shown them to Heath, and he insists on Mrs. Page being as young as her child! I objected, for many reasons. 'Oh,' Heath replied, 'I don't care about her maternity, or Shakespeare, or anything else. You must not make her more than twenty or nobody will buy! if you won't, I

must get Frank Stone to do her instead. All Frank Stone's beauties are nineteen exactly, and that's the age for me!'" He used to be highly pleased when I approved of conforming to the world in such matters; he liked the *laissez faire*, and thought the wisest thing to do was to make oneself as comfortable as circumstances would permit.

Mrs. Meadows was a daughter of Henning, the sculptor of the friezes on the Athenæum Club and on the park gate by Apsley House. Henning also cut, by grooving it out of a slate mould, the beautiful miniature of the Panathenaic procession on the Parthenon, supplying the missing groups by invention. Casts from these were immensely popular, but the sale was destroyed by the piracy of itinerant vendors. The old sculptor used to be driven furious by these men coming even to his own yard offering them for sale. At the time I speak of, about 1841, he was aged, with a noble presence; he had lost no hair, but it was pure white, and long, falling down upon his shoulders. His favourite subject was Biblical criticism, for which he had cultivated Hebrew and Greek to some extent, and he was fond of reading papers to a club of enthusiasts. These papers he would bring and re-read to me night succeeding night, especially one about the bottomless pit, which seemed appropriately endless. Walking home expecting him one day, I was considering how I could stop off these readings, when I caught sight of a little bill posted up: "Lost last night in this neighbourhood," with a long account of the M.S.,

and promise of a reward on recovery. He had dropped it on the way home, a fact not surprising, as he walked along the street waving his arms about as if delivering an oration, and his voluminous coat flying about him "like an army with banners."

Some of Henning's stories were so amusing that I once wrote some of them down. They are rather long, but I may transcribe and still shorten the shortest I have preserved, which is about Mrs. Siddons. He had modelled a bust of her in Edinburgh, and when he arrived in London he carried a letter from Mrs. Grant of Laggan, which he forwarded to Mrs. Siddons, asking when it would be convenient to receive a visit from him. Mrs. Siddons made an appointment; he kept the hour, and was told she was at church. Shortly after arrived an apology for not being at home, at the same time directing him to send a cast of her bust to a friend's house who wanted to purchase it. This he did, with a receipt, but the friend would not pay, he understood it was to be a gift! Here the old gentleman warmed up into fury, describing how great a show she tried to make, and how much she tried to get people to serve her for nothing. Two or three months after, Mrs. Siddons drove up to his door, and, after profuse recognitions, mentioned a great personage who wished to have the drawing Henning had done when modelling her bust in Edinburgh. Henning bowed, but could not make up his mind to part with it. "By the bye," she then said, "she believed he had an account against her for casts she had from him

in Edinburgh." Henning blandly reminded her she had kindly consented to sit at Mrs. Grant's desire, and that these casts were in acknowledgment of her kindness. Her appearance of mortification became visible, but she continued, "Mr. Henning, I was unsuccessful in calling upon you shortly after you came to town, you having changed your lodgings." "I have never changed my residence since arriving," replied the sculptor, with a bow and a smile. "I only said in my note respecting the bust I sent to the gentleman's address, that it was possible I might, as indeed I then intended, but I did not: the mistake is singular, madam." This conversation he used to end by the exclamation, "She was a woman without a heart, a monster in nature."

The club—or set of men who used to meet and read papers—of which he was a member, and to a meeting of which he took me, was highly interesting as showing that in London were still existing nearly every form of scientific superstition or vagary we usually fancy extinct long ago. The shop filled with alchymical and astrological books and other related works, described by Bulwer in the introduction to one of his novels, which I knew very well, and where I had bought several curious cards containing formulæ relating to the influences of "heavenly bodies," was an evidence of the same fact. Some of Henning's acquaintances, if one could believe his statement, were daily engaged in the search for the *elixir vitae*. However, I saw or heard nothing at the

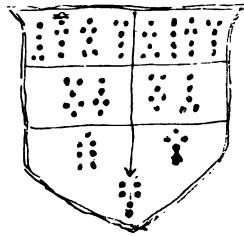
meeting worth inquiring into, though I met Heraud, the poet of "The World before the Flood," in whom I had a sort of superstitious interest. But when he offered to take me to Varley the astrologer and friend of Blake to get a horoscope drawn, I willingly accepted the proposal.

Being about to take the most imprudent step in life, I was infinitely more interested in the horoscope of L. M. N. (Letitia Margery Norquoy) than about my own. Kenny Meadows had given me a little sketch by Blake of a huge stout human figure with an elephant's head, dandling on his foot a human child similarly equipped, which he explained as most probably a symbolical portrait of Varley, so I was prepared to find a "mountain of man." He received us most pleasantly at his tea-table, and at once producing a book of risings and settings, etc., of all the great planets, with an almanac for the year of the lady's birth, he soon gave me a highly favourable scheme of fortune for her. The fat astrologer, in a dressing-gown and black skullcap on his bald head, and the thin young man sitting beside him watching his proceedings, with the venerable sculptor looking on, made an amusing trinity: I wondered if any of the three had any faith in the matter. After forty years, I fear either the planets or their expositor must have made a mistake!

I could not give him the hour of my own birth, so, as he was determined to read my fortune too, he did it by geomancy. I had found this "science of chance" described by Lilly in his *Merlin Revived*

(1683) as the third sort of divination, the geomantical or terrestrial. "In this," says Lilly, "certain figures are raised, from the first four of which, called fathers, are produced other four called daughters; these eight bring forth grandchildren. From them come two witnesses, from these a judge, and the judgment upon this sort of divination is not much unlike that of astrology. But the foundation seems to be laid upon a false supposition,—that the soul of man knoweth things to come, but is hindered by the dullness of the organs of the body,—and I take it to be idle, vain, and superstitious, as not built on any foundation of reason, or supported by anything but fancy."

Unhappily for Lilly, thus defending astrology by decrying geomancy, the terrestrial science supposes just the opposite of what he alleges. In raising the figures we must not count, nor endeavour to count, the innumerable dots we rapidly make, these being afterwards summed up to give odds or evens, so that it is a science of chance: it supposes that the



forces of the body, undirected by conscious reason, can show us whither we are drifting. Here is the form laid out for the incantation, and filled in as it

was by my operating in the manner now described ; without producing the diagram, indeed, it is vain to try to convey a clear idea of this *schauspiel*.

The upper four figures to the left of the spectator represent love, marriage, children, friends ; those on the right, money, inheritance, business, study. The second line of four represent, on the left, prosperity, or the reverse, and length of life ; on the right, nature of death, good or evil fame. The two figures below the line sum up all those above, and the final figure at the base gives the total result. The game can only be tried once, and if any counting is employed it is futile. It will be observed that nearly the half of the above figures present three single, and one three double dots, but there is only one out of the whole fifteen perfectly symmetrical, the symmetrical being the happy figures ; and that the last figure is a regular, and therefore excellent figure, but badly founded, as it cannot stand.

Varley had a great deal to say about all these figures which was exceedingly curious and interesting. The first and the twelfth, indicating love and length of life, he found nearly perfect ; the second was called (all the figures have names to the initiated) Lætitia, which, curiously enough, was the name of my intended wife ; of the last he exclaimed, "A pretty figure and a good, but it stands upon its head!"

Another man brought in contact with me by my illustrating books was W. J. Linton, wood-engraver to calling, a poet by nature, but a politician by

impulse. He was the friend of Mazzini in the discovery of the Grahaming of letters by the Post Office. He wrote the letter, traced it, and discovered it had been opened, then retired from the matter, leaving the exposure to others. When I left London in 1844, and Dame Fortune appeared determined to bowl over the geomancer's figure that stood upon its head, Linton wrote me endless amusing letters, larded with pieces of wise rhapsodical verse such as this :

Look towards the future,
Credit your power,
Fearlessly root your
Feet in the hour
God hath appointed.

Night's starry portal
Swarms like the sea ;
Worth is immortal :
Work cannot be
E'er disappointed.

The seed man soweth
Depends on a breath ;
The seed of God groweth
In the quick heart of Death,
Death the anointed.

He was a believer in me : one of the friends and lovers I have never been without, who have persisted in the belief that I would sooner or later do something surprising. Linton left London about the time I did. He bought Brantwood on Coniston Water, which he afterwards sold to Ruskin, and occasionally came to Newcastle to stay with Joseph Cowen—then

a violent republican, now a great parliamentary orator. At Brantwood Linton continued to publish for two years or three a monthly he called *The English Republic*, nearly entirely written by himself, perhaps Cowen assisting a little. He is now in America, and his wife, one of the ablest novelists of the day and the author of *Joshua Davidson*, has lately taken up her abode in the south of Italy.

CHAPTER XI

LEIGH HUNT—G. H. LEWES

RETURNING to the period of my arrival in London, let me say something of literary friends, whom I confess to preferring very much to the artistic. My first place of abode was in a quiet *cul-de-sac* in Coventry Street called Panton Square, in a lodging-house which had a common breakfast-room. On the chimney-piece of this room the letters of the lodgers were placed as they arrived. Among these I soon observed a great many to one person accumulating and never diminishing. They were addressed to the then editor of the *Atlas*, a gentleman whom I afterwards learned to appreciate highly for his erudite criticism, and for his edition of English poets. My freshman's curiosity was excited. I always had the room to myself, so I made a tentative inquiry of the old lady who sometimes served me, a sort of housekeeper,—who used to have some difficulty, partly from sleepiness and partly from a favourite liquor she imbibed, in lighting my candle at night. She used to make sundry amusing false passes between the lit and unlit bougies ; she

did not mind me being amused and assisting her, so we became on good terms, but she was not communicative. A few mornings after I understood her reason. I was awakened at a very early hour by an altercation close to my bedroom door. It slowly opened, while a female voice outside still remonstrated; then a gruff male voice replied he must see for himself, and forthwith an unmistakable executioner of the law entered, took a good look at me, apologised, and retired again.

This was a warning, had I needed one, not to depend upon my pen to make my fortune. But I never contemplated doing so, having neither taste nor talent for popular writing. Mr. Hastie, then the member for Paisley, who lived near Lockhart, and was one of his social circle, to whom his sister in Edinburgh had recommended me, offered to bring me in contact with the great man. I had, however, learned to hate Lockhart for his party prejudices, said to be unbearable, so I declined. Still the literary adept was the character I most respected, and I had every intention of being if possible a poet, and the most valued new friend I made very early was Leigh Hunt.

On the first interview, I think it was, he told me of Browning's play of *Strafford* being placed on the stage. This was on the 1st May 1837. My admiration for *Paracelsus* was so great I determined to go and to applaud, without rhyme or reason; and so I did, in the front of the pit. From the first scene it became plain that applause was not

the order. The speakers had every one of them orations to deliver, and no action of any kind to perform. The scene changed, another door opened, and another half-dozen gentlemen entered as long-winded as the last. Still I kept applauding, with some few others, till the howling was too overpowering, and the disturbance so considerable that for a few minutes I lost my hat. The truth was that the talk was too much the same, and too much in quantity ; it was of no use continuing to hope something would turn up to surprise the house.

I found Leigh Hunt living at Chelsea in a quiet street, near Carlyle,—a small house with two windows to the drawing-room, in which he appeared to live, and which consequently contained his books—a small collection, mostly Italian, in which the fifty-six volumes of the *Parnasso Italiano* was most important—and his piano, a venerable instrument. Here I always found him, and though I sometimes sat late with him, perhaps too late for his habits, we were never interrupted. Mrs. Hunt I never saw but once by chance on the staircase. At this time he was going through one of his periods of impecuniosity which he was too self-sustained and really too contented by nature to care to hide. I found him at first, as at subsequent times, seated in an easy-chair covered with chintz, wrapped in a dressing-gown, his feet in slippers, rendered comfortable by means of a railway-rug, and his little table drawn close beside his economical

fire. It was the season of primroses, and still very cold. Close to his bronze ink-stand—a cast of that design called Petrarch's, which had been presented to him—stood a pot of those flowers he had just bought from an itinerant vendor. He received me without affectation, referred to the flowers as if they lit up his room or even his life, and said, as I had come from Edinburgh, that he had no quarrel with Scotchmen now, having had plenty at a former period. I said I fancied that period was past with every one else, and was glad it was past with him; and we were on kind and easy terms at once.

There were then literally no poets before the public, or nobody cared for those that existed sufficiently to make them the theme of conversation. About this time Châteaubriand said, in his lectures on English literature, that the only popular poet we had was a political verse-writer who was a working blacksmith, meaning Ebenezer Elliott. I have mentioned Browning, with whose *Paracelsus* I was well acquainted, and Hunt told me I had a neighbour living in Mornington Crescent I ought to know, Alfred Tennyson, who was a real poet—of course perfectly well known to me. I should be acquainted with him. Hunt thought he would receive me in the most friendly spirit, but I did not try him. At the moment I was contented with Hunt, who had shared the fate of all men who have been connected even in an accidental way with others of greater genius as unpopular as

themselves. The malignity with which he had been treated made me hold him in greater esteem, and I was amused to find the man and his conversation identical with his literary style, both of thought and expression. This left no room to doubt that the optimism, geniality, and mild wisdom we find in his works was entirely natural to him. His rather small face and large head with longish gray hair were handsome and susceptible of much mobility. His changes of mood and expression all belonged to one class, that of thoughtful amiability; to expect him to be troubled by many things other men feel of paramount importance one very soon saw to be out of the question. The limitations of his nature were, I fancy, just as obvious as the excellences. Without passion, his perseverance in liberalism, or in principles of art, had to me little interest; he evidently could not argue and would not develop or change. I have often thought over Dickens's attack, but without understanding why a man of his temperament should, so late in the day, renew the old misrepresentations of so mild and even-natured and unfortunate a man as Leigh Hunt. A cup of tea was my only entertainment, brought on a tray, and that rarely; his own food seemed to be panade—some sort of bread stuff, like Beranger's simple diet, which used to simmer in a small iron pot on the hob. More than once he frankly alluded to his affairs, saying he was content with moderate luxuries. "The only extravagances," he once said,

"I should like to indulge in would be to spend a few crumbs of shillings in old-book shops in my afternoon walks; but I can deny myself even that."

Of Shelley he never spoke but with unqualified love and regard; to him that great poet, though only half-matured intellect even at the time of his death, was an ideal human creature, one in whom he had found no flaw. Keats, on the other hand, had no such position in his mind even as a poet. I came to the conclusion, indeed, as much from the indifference and reticence expressed in his face as from any admissions he made, that he had still some misgiving about Keats's general poetic workmanship. The old and better-trained man who has seen the beginnings of another, and held the relation of "guide, philosopher, and friend" to him, has seen the seamy side of that other and cannot easily forget it. Besides, the friendly relationship of Shelley to the martyr-editor of the *Examiner* was political and moral as well as literary. The reception by Keats of Haydon's unpleasant allusions to Hunt, now visible in the *Correspondence and Table-talk*, lately published, without any visible protest or dissent, shows little real friendship to Hunt on his part.

As a perfectionist in poetry, whose thought and rhythm were one, he seemed to hold Coleridge above all others. Nor did he limit his high praise to the four or five exceptional poems we all hold so high, a small modicum out of the mass, but included others as equally admirable, though much less inter-

esting. He described with genuine delight a day he spent at Fiesole : a loitering day with the wild tulips about the ground where he walked, when he was haunted by "Kubla Khan," the poem of poems, from noon till night. "It was just because the place, the climate, and the poem were homogeneous," he explained.

Bentham and Godwin had been both, it appeared, intimately known to him. The first, he asserted, was the only true undemonstrative atheist he had known, never using any theological or spiritualistic terms or allusions in conversation ; and when others employed them or the ideas they represented, he simply affirmed he could not entertain allusions of that kind.

Through Leigh Hunt I became acquainted with G. H. Lewes by means of the following note, which may be worth transcribing :

7 HARRINGTON STREET, HAMPSTEAD ROAD [1837].

SIR—Leigh Hunt tells me that as "cordial natures" and as neighbours we ought to know each other. How far that is the case I know not, but this much I do know, that we both agree in heartily loving Shelley, are fond of books, of poetry,—though you are a poet and I am none,—and I have no doubt there are many other points in which we so far assimilate as to enjoy each other's society ; so in spite of its not being *selon les règles* of this most artificial of worlds, and might by most people be looked upon as impertinence (but which I feel assured will not by you), I take the shortest and easiest way I can think of for our better acquaintance. We are near neighbours. If we like each other we have only reached that liking *per saltum* ; if we do not, why, no harm is done, we can

"shrink into our conscious selves" once more. I am a student living a quiet life, but have a great gusto for intellectual acquaintance, with which, I am sorry to say, I am not overburdened. If you will overlook this bit of contempt for conventional forms, and are at all inclined to extend the circle of your acquaintance, a line or two will answer all the purpose of the most punctilious and recondite introduction.—Your obedient servant,

G. H. LEWES.

This characteristic note of course brought us together, and I found him my junior by five or six years, therefore just out of his nonage, an exuberant but not very reliable or exact talker, a promising man of parts, a mixture of the man of the world and the boy. I could not make him out or get a true glimpse of his acquirements, holding by high and pure ways of life and habits of body, which he ignored and repudiated. We took to each other, however, and had many sittings, demonstrative on both sides, and became in a short time intimate enough for him to address me, "*Caro mio Duns Scotus, artist, poet, fiddler, philosopher, and so forth : quid sit nomen ?*"¹

¹ What the word "fiddler" alludes to I cannot now tell ; probably it is simply *wit* on his part, or more probably an imitation of Dryden's lines on George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham—

In one short revolution of the moon,
Chymist and fiddler, statesman and buffoon ;

but the appellation "Duns Scotus" was here for the first time applied, and has remained with me. This was in the beginning of 1837, when G. H. L. was living with his mother, as did also his brother, then a student in medicine. He was quite in his infancy as a professional literary man. I have seen it stated that he denied himself food to enable him to purchase books, but no symptom of any such necessity was visible about the *ménage*, nor do I believe it ever existed.



Scene from the play 'The Two Friends' by J. B. Stowe.

In the course of life I have met three men to whom literary acquirements, languages especially, so difficult and laborious to myself, were perfectly easy, and whose verbal accuracy was unimpeachable. Lewes was the second of these, William Shand having been the first. Men who assimilate so quickly what is presented to them have a knack of using what they receive as if they had thought it out for themselves. I was at that moment brooding over a series of designs in outline to represent the stages in life of the self-seeking man of ordinary powers and unscrupulous ability, the man of the world who becomes a judge, bishop, or court doctor, to be called "Chorea Sancti Viti, or Steps in the Journey of Prince Legion." One of these designs embodied the experience I have already in these notes described, when the dawn of consciousness reveals to him his self-dependence and isolation in nature. This I did by picturing a schoolboy who neglects his books and the school-bell in poring over his own image in a pool, which I called "The Influx of Thought." Lewes proposed to write to these designs, but I found his notion was to appropriate the idea in question, as well as all the others indicated in the designs, as his own, and to relegate me to the position of an illustrator. So I brushed away his offer.¹

¹ These designs, by their suggestive mysticism, attracted many writers. I am sorry to say they were not so good artistically as in invention. A Dr. Le Gay Brereton, who afterwards emigrated to Australia or New Zealand, published a volume on the same scheme, and called it, without consulting me, *Prince Legion*. Mr. Clough,

Many years after, in 1851, I published twelve of these designs, when Lewes was writing his splendid but rather dithyrambic operatic criticism in the *Leader*; and on receipt of the volume he made it a peg whereon to hang his reflections on the vanity of ambition in his next opera criticism in the *Leader*. His description of poor me and the impression I, a youth of twenty-six or so, made upon him, still more a youth, he being but twenty-one, is so astounding I must quote it. "I am again sitting beside the grave and high-minded Scott in his low-roofed studio, crammed with books, casts, wood-blocks, sketches, and papers. . . . Art gave occupation to his soul; reverie sweetened life; hope beautified it. He led a lonely life, but led it like a noble soul. To see him, to know him, was an influence not to be forgotten. Nature had given him a melancholy nature, which inclined him to the mystic thinkers; and although I was as strongly repelled from mysticism as he was attached to it, the force of sympathy and the chance that some light *might be* found there, and, above all, the admiration I felt for him, made me too plunge into those waters. . . . Our fortunes lay apart. I left England, and solaced many long nights by the composition of *my* 'Life-Journey of

at that time Registrar, London University, invited me to his rooms near Gordon Square, and said he would like to do something of the same kind in poetry. There is indeed some similarity to my series of designs in his *Dipsychus*, but the resemblance is very partial. Clough's subject is really the struggle between serving God and gaining the world. Mr. W. H. Budden of Newcastle reprinted the plates ten years after their first appearance, accompanied by his own poetical commentaries.

Prince Legion.' I have the fragment still, and read it not a year ago: it is detestable! The boy starts on his career resolved to be crowned in the Capitol; midway, he discovers that he is bald, commonplace, and gouty. He meant to be a hero; he finds himself Mr. Smith."

Even before his residence in Germany Lewes rushed head foremost into the most ambitious undertakings; owning himself no poet, he wrote poetry plentifully, and completed a whole drama on the subject of Tasso and his unhappy love. Just after my marriage he brought this manuscript out to us in Camden Town, and generously gave us the benefit of his reading of it. He was a very good reader, and the scenes were very stirring and full of passion, but the expression of this passion in the exceedingly complex position, social and moral, of the speakers appeared to me altogether arbitrary and elocutionary, so that at last I took courage and hinted to him that at our age—his age or mine—we wanted the experience, the knowledge of life to lift us into the position of the actors he was dealing with. His answer was startling: "Yes, you think so? Well, do you know, young as I am, I have been all through such experiences! I have had ladies at my feet, and I have myself been next to mad with love and its fallacies!" He began to read again, when Tasso was made to exclaim, "My brain will snap!" which he gave in an unhesitating voice that neither my wife nor I could stand, but laughed aloud.

When he followed my precipitately imprudent

example, we paid the newly-married pair a wedding visit, and found his wife—child-wife, I may say—one of the loveliest creatures in the world. She was daughter of Swinfen Jervise, the Welsh Member of Parliament, as charming as she was beautiful, properly enough called, as he actually spoke of her in print, “a human rose.”

Some of the Hunt circle had then a proclivity to the social system of uniting in the same household. We visited one Sunday evening Thornton Hunt, Smith Williams, who wrote the Fine Arts in the *Athenæum*, and was afterwards Smith and Elder’s “reader,” and somebody else, with all their wives and families. This was in Church Street, Kensington. Lewes was there, joining in the singing and playing as if music was as easy to him as writing dramas. And Leigh Hunt was there too, charming as he always was. I introduced my wife to him, and he put his hand on her head like a patriarch blessing her.

CHAPTER XII

MY STORY OF ROSABELL

LEIGH HUNT had at that time taken up the *Repository*, a monthly that W. J. Fox had previously edited, and he asked me to give him the story of Rosabell, of which I have spoken before leaving Edinburgh, one of the cherished manuscripts I had taken with me. It has since been more than once republished, but still I find it asked for in vain ; and having revised it a little, I would like to give it here at length, especially as it may be referred to elsewhere. First called Rosabell after the simple-minded creature I had met, I was persuaded to alter the name to Mary Anne, as more indicative of the humble rank of my heroine.

ROSABELL

RECITATIVE WITH SONGS

I

THE lark unseen o'er the village spire
Sings like an echo from the sky.
" Let us go, mother, the first bell is still,

And the second begins to ring,"
Said little Rosabell,
As she ran to the door and looked o'er the fields,
Lying wide in the Sunday's rest,
The patches of meadow and tall dry corn,
And hedgerows sharp between.
Her cautious mother locks the door,
And leads her to the belfry's call ;
So little Rosabell,
In her knitted nankin hood
That shaded face and neck went by
Each cottage with a sober step.
The bell clanged louder as they went ;
In folded stillness, the white clouds
Seemed cradled by the sound.
"Mother," she asked, "will father sing
Psalms by himself upon the hill ?
Do all the sheep as well as we
Know Sunday from the common days ?"
They pass into the churchyard now,
A pigmy hunch of sward,
All rank and rough with sinking stones
Looking up here and there,
But quite a wondrous wilderness
To little Rosabell.
And the old men in sauntering groups,
Gossiping o'er their staves, were grave
Kings and councillors to her.
The laird has come to church to-day !
And lady too so grandly clad—
She will look at them all the time,
All through the psalms and sermon too,—
But listen to the text, my child !
"In the days of thy youth remember God,
When old thou wilt not forget him."

2

- " I've come through the fields to meet thee, lass,
Over the meadows misty green,
Before the sun has dried the grass,
Or the earliest bird is seen.
- " I've come through the rye to meet thee, lass,
Through the long rye-rigs deep,
Before the clouds from the hill-tops pass,
While the sheep even seem to sleep.
- " My father's wains are on the highway,
We will meet them by the tree,
And drive to the town this market day
In each other's company.
- " Then dip thy face in the water clear,
Lave thy neck, thy shoulders fair,
Quickly lace thy boddice, dear,
And quickly snood thy hair.
- " For I've come through the rye to meet thee, lass,
Over the meadows misty green,
Before the clouds from the hill-tops pass,
Ere the plover or lark are seen."

3

- " Your mother has told me, simpleton !
You are to be a sempstress now ;
Well, well, don't blush, we don't : take off
That shapeless hat. You read and write ?
And dance and sing perhaps as well—
The freshness of the hay is on your hair,
And the withdrawing shyness of your home
All over you. Indeed, my dear,
You're as good and pretty as child need be.

If this new world shall thrive as well with you
As that you leave, you're fortunate :
You have a throng of comrades here."

So said a well-bedizened dame,
Leading her toward the chamber where
Her thimbled girls with needles and pins
Were trimming their silks with gimp and lace.
Anon the dragon leaves her brood,
And about the stranger girl they press !
"Sit here, dear ; tell me, what's your name ?
And have you got a brother, child ?"—
"Nay, Catherine, I am mistress here,
And how to teach her everything,
First of all to braid her hair,
I know the best : her looks refresh
Like oranges in a hot theatre !"

But timid Rosabell,
Both "yes" and "no," she feared to say,
Scarce knowing what they meant at all ;
But aye she cast inquiring eyes
At each one as they spoke.
Then Joan withdrew her from the rest,
And leaning o'er her, whispered, "Sweet,
None may hear us, tell me true—
Have you left a lover-lad
Behind you by the plough ?"
"I never thought of such a thing—
And yet perhaps I have, there's one——"

Began true Rosabell,
Thinking she had found a friend ;
But alas, amidst their laughter
The astonished crimson spread
Over her forehead, over her cheeks,
And clasped her round the neck.

4

A year has gone since last the voice
That taught her all she knew till then—
Her mother's voice—brought early loves
And early ties and scenes to mind.
Many a cleverer tongue since then
Had mimicked love and hope to her,
Or for the easy merchandise
Of smiles had bartered praise.
But how to meet her mother now?
And yet it must be done.
She will be glad, thought Rosabell,
 Finely-dressed Miss Rosabell,
To find a lady in her child.

Andrew came with her; they had walked
A long way since they left their homes.
Poor Andrew, she had ceased to write.
He pondered, hesitated, smiled;
They both hoped still that all was right.
But she had not run to meet them,—
She did not push him back and laugh,—
Nor kiss her mother's cheek did she—
Scarce knew he, with a quivering lip,
Which way to look or speak, her dress
So trimmed and flounced and decked, her hair
So curled, her head so jauntily
Withheld, so wandering her eye,
 Finely-dressed Miss Rosabell.
He had brought a gift for her,
But now he wavered bashfully
Whether he ought to offer it,
Though two weeks' wages it had cost,
 Finely-dressed Miss Rosabell.

They left her; silent sat she long,
Silent and still as wood or stone.

Every word that had been said,
Each look, she heard and saw again ;
Her wide eyes fixed upon the floor,
No smile or tear, like stone or wood.
A face bends over her bent neck ;
So close its breathing stirs her hair,
Her closed lips leap, her arms expand,
Her young heart flutters, throbs,—ah, now
She can both laugh and weep.
Her hand and heart, her body, her life
She would give him, freely give :
Smother up the thought of ill :
Heaven is round her, as he cries,
“ All is prepared, come, Rosabell,
Little dear, now come with me ! ”

5

In a neat suburban room,
Half-remembered opera airs
Sang thoughtless Rosabell.
And Joan was also there,
With an old piano too—
Delightful, but so hard to learn !
Joan laughed, said wicked words at times,
But Rosabell sat still and sang,
Or, head askant at the window pane,
She watched for Archer along the road—
And now and then and all at once
She would dance across the room for joy,
O would it were not so intense !
Who could dream that such a change
Might come in a year like leaves in spring !
She was happier than a wife can be,
Cried thoughtless Rosabell.
Mother had told her not to look
Towards strangers ; nor to speak too loud
To sister-sempstresses until

She knew them well ; to rise betimes ;
To dress quite plain ; to lace her boots
As she had always done : a long
Rubric and creed she made her learn
With promised faith, and Rosabell
Believed some punishment would follow
From some mysterious far-off power,
If in aught she disobeyed :—
Yet had she dared ! the bond was burst !
No lightning flashed, but all at once
A new sun seemed to shine on her ;
All merry voices sounded merrier now,
With nothing to restrain their merriment !
Free-will was hers at last, at last—
Was it indeed ?—but so it seemed—
And her mother, like a seeress blind,
An oracle by sudden dumbness closed,
To her own wonder, from her trust
Altogether sank away.
Who could dream that such a change
Could come in a year like leaves in spring ?
Cried thoughtless Rosabell.

6

How nice ! things paid for everywhere,
How nice ! the breakfast ready there,
When one gets up so queer and ill,
And mignonette scenting all the air
Over the narrow sill.

So many fine things too to wear :
Some mine alone, and some to share
With Joan, who is always right,
Though I wish she would not swear,
But he's my own delight !

The window looks upon the west,
O'er placarded walls,—oh blest
Is every stone, and crack, and seam,
And every chimney's smoky vest,—
 'Tis all a pleasant dream !

The errand boy comes whistling by ;
He rests him on the kerbstone nigh,
So happy, and yet so badly shod.
He whistles and sings so merrily,
 Spite of his weary load.

" Will you take a glass of wine ? "—
" Whatever *you* like shall be mine "—
" That play last night was jolly indeed "—
" These drover-men are far from fine "—
 " Yet these lambs, you know, must bleed."

Are these footsteps on the stair ?
Is the sun in the noonday air ?
Rosabell, you are so still !
Is not yours a pleasant share
 Of good amidst so much of ill ?

7

She sang, or tried to sing this song :
But time flies over every goal,
And never turns : and how felt he
Who carried her so far this way—
A way she did not know at all ?
" Life, they say, is a melody
That never runs quite through the scale
When Cupid's hand the plectrum holds,—
Good faith, his hand should be of gold ! "
Quoth he one morning, as a friend
Broke in upon his gloom.
" What ! Archer, moody, strange to say,
When Rosey now is all your own.

I have seen her, such an air,
Canova's posing Dancer, or—
Or—the Milo Venus—best of all—
The Scottish homebred naturalness
Is still intact ; she must have gained
An art like pure simplicity.”—
“ Oh yes ; but she's no actress, no,
She's fresh as spring : More wine, dear Thorn ?
You should know her ; come with me.”—
“(Yes, I can stand a glass or two),
But I may turn your rival then !”—
“ Oh ! why not.”—“ Well, be it so !”

Few weeks thereafter, Rosey cried,
“ Joan, I wonder what they mean ;
He never comes, his handsome friend
Laughs at him.”—“ Oh, forget him, dear ;
He was not worth your loving so.
How richly all our wants are filled
Since he is gone.”—“ They are indeed !”
Said Rosabell, with a scornful laugh—
A laugh so very like Joan's !

8

“ This bonnet is quite charming now,
Its faint rose tints suit me so well ;
But this is not the scarf I think
To wear with it to-day !”—
“ That will not matter in the Park ;
Jacob, are the horses out ?”

“ Who's he that wears the forage-cap ?
So like the farrier in our corps—
That darling ensign nods to you—
How jauntily he sways himself
Upon the square toe of his boot !”
“ These ladies, do you know their names ?”

" Yes, that is Thorn's Maid, Rosabell."
" Madame Rosabell, hey-day !
Not quite Maid Marian, clumsy though "—
" The brutes are laughing, let us turn ! "
Such are snatches of the talk
Of loungers not worth verse at all.

" Mark you the wide-eyed earnestness
All over that great boy's face ?
They say he is a poet too !
'Tis like our old May mornings gone !
Almost as sweet as honeycomb.
He is an innocent as yet ;
Will he be a poet long ? "
With hard-mouthed cunning, quoth she now,
Beneath the unpaid chandelier.
But a snake with rasping scales lifts up
Its quivering tongue beneath her heart :
Her father, mother, sister, friend,
Where are they now ? and all those here
Scoff at her, cheapen her, she knows.
She cannot still her fluttering lips ;
She smiles with hatred hid within,
The tears are still too strong for her.

9

The chill of eve is stayed from closing yet
By the roseate golden streaks
Pressing back the impending dusk ;
Day, like an eye that ought to watch,
Closes but by slow degrees.
Andrew stands by the bolted door
Of a cottage lone and dark,
His finger bent as if to knock,
Yet he pauses ere it falls,
And hesitating draws long breaths.
A cat sits on the thatch-roof ridge,

Its tail wrapt round its feet ;
On the deep-set lattice from within
Flickers the sinking fire.

The door is opened ; by the hearth
Down he sits. He comes not there
To seek her who so oft had led
His footsteps morn or eve :
At morn ere plover or lark were seen,
At eve when work was done.
No ! she will not be there again
To hear her father's evening psalm,
To see her mother's wrinkles deepen,
While her broken-spirited sister fears
To sing as she prepares the meals.

Long he sat, few words were said,
Though oft he fain would speak :
" Ah, have you news of Rosabell ? "
The mother cried at last,
Her frail hand on his stalwart arm.
And when he spoke, his words, alas,
Were but an echo of her fears.
Her hand slid from his arm, she leant
Quietly over the fire.
Anon a tear was heard to hiss
Upon the burning brands,
And spire away with the pale red smoke
Through the wide old chimney-gap :
A prayer it was, a prayer sent up
Into the dark among the stars.

10

Bring me wine at eventide,
And poppy-juice to-morrow ;
Can I forget those years of pride,
Or go to bed with sorrow ?

They called me Rosabell the knave,
Rosabell the fortunate !
How kind unto the woman-slave
To bid her thank her fate.

Bring the drink ! it may not be
That I throw up the game,
Nor sink to scorn contentedly
With brain and heart on flame.

I am forsaken, not a wheel
Rings on the street's hard stones,
In wildest merriment let me reel,
Lest the vile say, she moans.

Bring me wine at eventide,
And poppy-juice to-morrow ;
Shall I forget the days of pride,
Or go to bed with sorrow ?

II

What is love ? 'tis hard to say ;
Each must answer for himself !
A Passion, chartered tragic queens
Compress within their struggling hearts
On painted stages with footlights
Shining up on breast and chin ;
A fire that burns up common things,
And keeps no count of days or deeds ;
A god whose voice is perfect song ;
A lamentation wild and loud
Unto the pillowed pitiless night.
Are any of these love ? maybe yes,
Girlhood leaps up answering, Yes !
Or is it the truth-born harmony
Of aspirations realised,
Glorifying careworn days

With the sunlight of good deeds :
A binding link of confidence,
A staff in the traveller's hand,
A music to the soldier's march
That charms his weariness,
An inter-breath of soul with soul
Under which we are at peace ?

The youth who wooed in early days
The damsel now quite lost and gone,
What time the cricket's chirm succeeds
The grasshopper's, wends towards his home—
A man, a home of every day.
Window and curtain and the light
That shines through it he knows :
All the things within that room
Penates are and Lars to him,
Household gods he worships there.
Contentedly he doffs his shoes
And draws his great chair near the fire :
Slumber is on his child, his dame
Sews tiny frills that it shall wear,
As ever-anon she turns a glance
Upon its open-mouthed repose :
Happy they seem thus eve by eve,
But toils he not at the loom all day ?
Ay, and each hour is as a wedge
To steady their advance to age,
When around them shall have grown
Stalwart sons with shoulders broad,
And daughters with long Eve-like hair
And noiseless steps upon the floor.
The blind child-god of love hath lent
His wings unto the hours, and smiles
As they hurry past like bees.
Love ! whom Anacreon's nymphs scarce pleased,
Who listened to Arcadian lutes
And thought them wearisome,
Unto the shuttle lends his ear !

12

Down the wet pavement gleam the lamps,
While the cold wind whistles past ;
A distant heel rings hurrying home,
It lessens into stillness now,
And she is left alone again.
The rain-drops from shop-eaves are blown
Against her face, she turns,
The wind lifts up the gaudy scarf,
Faded now, with ragged fringe,
And flings it blinding o'er her head.
Her lips are sharp, as if a scorn
Of all humanity had shrunk
And bitten them ; her eyes
They are not sunk, for generous cares
Are no part of her misery :
They never weep, for she can think
Of long ago without a sigh,
But they are blind and insolent ;
Then why measure tears in a cracked wine-cup,
Or blame the madman should he laugh
While his mother's funeral passes ?
Can the outcast retrace her steps ?
Would any mourn with her although
She watered the earth with tears ?
She cannot wash Christ's feet with them,
For He has gone to heaven :
Perhaps she is without the pale,
And would not if she could.
Give her but heat, and food, and drink,
She needs no more ; the sun but shines
That the shadow where she sits may be
The darker, so she feels the light
In which the insects all rejoice
Can unenlivening fall on such
As have a soul. But hark, she sings,
Sings a song we write not here.

13

The smoke of the chimneys rises straight
And glowing in the yellow rays of even
That strike athwart their dusky tops
And shimmer on the gilded balls of spires
Or western windows like a festival ;
The hum of men decreases, and the sharp
Shrill tongue of childhood now is heard alone,
Until the mothers from their windows call
To bed. The homeless saunters on :
Once on a time the harvest-queen
She bore the last bunch home with joy ;
And once her necklace was of gold,
Or double gilt at least,
When a gleam of her silken sock had fann'd
The fool's heart to white heat.

She leaned herself against the door
Of a poison-palace lighting up ;
A band of girls were still at play
Beyond it : in the midst sat one,
While a circle hand in hand advanced
To the sitter and retired again
At every rhyme they sang.

Water, water wall flower,
Growing there so high,
We are little maidens,
We must all die.
Especially Rosabella,
She is the whitest flower,
She can skip, and she can sing
And ding us, ding us ower !

A diss, a diss o' green grass,
A daisy diss, a diss !

Come all pretty maidens
And dance along with this,
And you shall have a duck so blue,
And you shall have a drake,
And you shall have a pretty young man
A-dancing for your sake.

She heard them to the end, she stood
As she were dead while still they sang ;
Then ran among them with a shriek
And cursed their innocence.

14

"You, Archer, here, so you are back
In the old country?"—"Well, you know
The governor is gone at last
To Abram's bosom, so I'm here."—
"Shall we take a good long walk,
And talk of old things come again?"—
"Yes, people seem this evening winged
Like a colony of crows
Circling about the tree-tops for an hour
Before they dive into their nests.
But know you aught of Rosabell,
Or where she's gone since Thorn, your friend,
Left her and his debts together?
She was too good for us, my boy—
I mean she was a simple soul,
Had no pretence, no management,
And that she-dog who lived with her,
Joan, levanted, and took off
Every trap and tog she had!
I fear 'tis half-past one with her,
And the night comes down apace:
I did hear something of her though,
And tried to find her. Jack Duff said,—
You knew Jack Duff, the penniless wag?—

'Take the policeman for your guide,'
But I had dropt the search, that's all."

Descent is easy : stage to stage,
Facile, they say, and swift, alas,
She found it as on shards of fire,
And Fates with scorpion-whips each side
Ran thrusting her to hell.

We sit beside the winter fire,
Or on the garden bench to read
Her story, pleased if it be told
With art and some sweet pathos, such
As flatters us to feel.
But let us watch her feet no more,
Unless we run to her with tears
And hold her hand and force her back,
Kissing her sodden wondering eyes :
It is too late, it may not be.

15

A white-washed, gas-lit, long, wide room,
A row of pallets either hand ;
In the first a gray-haired creature, though
Not past her youth ; within the next
A child with yellow teeth and eyes,
And lips so blue, dead lips indeed ;
The next, but no, pass on, pass on,
One is there we have seen before,
Whose steps from childhood we have traced.
This is her best, her only bourne ;
Why should she live to fight with dogs
For bones and cinders thrifty wives
Place for the dustman's early bell ?
Why should she live ? Four boards soon sawn
And blackened, but no sweet green turf
Can she have to cover her
In the church shadow far away.

And hearts as innocent as hers
As blindly shall succeed, shall take
Leap after leap into the dark,
Blaspheming soul and sense at once,
And every lamp on every street
Shall light their wet feet down to death.

CHAPTER XIII

THOMAS SIBSON AND R. N. WORNUM, DR. SAMUEL
BROWN, ETC.

ONE of the most able men, as well as one of the most interesting in his personality, it has been my luck to know, but who is already altogether forgotten, rose on my horizon a year or two after Lewes's day. This was Tom Sibson, a painter by nature who had cut himself off from his family sympathies by leaving his uncle's counting-house simply because he felt that poverty with a congenial occupation was preferable to plenty of money at the sacrifice of all one's life to trade. Fully sensible of the importance of ways and means to make life agreeable, he took the present step deliberately, and came to London like myself to study as well as to work for bread. Nothing seemed less hopeful, as he had only educated himself hitherto by pocket-book memorandum-sketching; morning, noon, and night, in church and market, railway carriage and tavern. But his manner impressed every one; there was in it a consciousness of power, and a direct determination to act with unaffected candour, accepting no aid or favour. I

confess I was surprised how far this carried him with the booksellers, his manner being wholly in his favour. Immediately a publisher engaged him to carry on a set of subsidiary illustrations to Dickens, following his monthly publications.

The influence of this tall and strong youth, doomed by consumption to a short span of manhood, was not very easily understood. It was not fascination, yet I never saw any one who did not attend to what he said and listen to him with something like respect. Except indeed his own brother, Dr. Frank Sibson, a successful man of the high shirt-collar style, given to the collection of Wedgewood ware: a kind of æsthetic culture only enjoyed by cold-blooded animals with high shirt-collars.

The coming event in the art world was the employment of art in the new Houses of Parliament. Tom did not presume to go into the contest, but he began to see that a severe training in elevated design and thorough power of drawing was necessary to the painter. Linton wanted to publish a history of England; Sibson would go to Munich and do the illustrations there. This was unexpected in a man who had hitherto only trained himself, as I have said, by sketching from nature; but I believe he wanted a change in that respect as well as of scene, perhaps felt death had settled everything for him. Indeed he used to say he knew he had only a short time to enjoy; why should he spend it on a high stool, with the day of the month before his eyes changed every morning? Or why should he

spend it illustrating other men's ideas, Dickens's or any one's? They've done the proper work; he could add little. At another time he said, looking at his watch, "I am the third to whom this watch has descended. Both of the others died about my age. *They* both listened to it as they went down; and it still goes tick, tick, tick; what does it matter? It says tick, tick! what does it matter?"

So he went to Munich, and became a pupil in Kaulbach's studio. The designs he accomplished there were as fine as the best of the Bavarian school of the time, and the letters he wrote home were very interesting. The German school of art, however, is antipathetic to that of England, so I do not go into the question here or quote from Sibson's letters. The cold winter of the highest capital in Europe decided his fate. He came home; next approaching winter left for a warmer climate, went to Malta, and died.

Before he left for Munich he bound all his sketches of all sorts and sizes from nature: pocket-book sketches for the most part, a surprising collection of able memoranda. I possess this folio, with the number written in the front of it, "counted by Ralph Nicholson Wornum," not yet secretary of the National Gallery, but then writing in Knight's *Cyclopædia* and elsewhere, and preparing a cartoon for the Westminster competition. The number is 1426 sketches, and the counting process is dated 9th April 1842.

Many years after, I met his brother Frank at

Christie's auction-room. He wanted to claim the book of sketches, but his wife, who was with him, shut him off in the most summary way by saying I had most right to it, having been the best of friends to Tom. A few more years, the same auction-room, that slaughter-house of collections, saw the last record of the family, which was extinguished by the death of Dr. Frank, who had become a member of the Royal Society, and an anatomist of some mark. He died in a moment in a hotel in Switzerland while his wife waited for him in a carriage at the door. His "elegant" Wedgewood trumpery was sold at Christie's, where one piece brought six hundred pounds.

I have mentioned Wornum ; he, Sibson, and myself met every Saturday for eighteen months to draw from the life an hour and a half. He was possessed of great knowledge of art and its history, acquired both from extensive reading and from long residence in Germany and Italy, but he had very little executive power ; just the opposite to Sibson, who could draw the expression of any creature's face at once without failure, but knew nothing learnedly. Nevertheless he had an all-observing eye and an all-describing power of words that made people stand aghast with wonder. He tried to write a sensational novel, which, however, came to nothing. R. N. W. was a Hercules in muscular development, and he married one of the most perfectly formed and most beautiful women in London. This was Miss Selden, the last descendant, it

appeared, of the statesman and writer, a lady who lived with Professor Long, her father-in-law. When I say perfectly formed, perhaps I ought to qualify the phrase by admitting she was very largely made. Not more, however, than the antique. One evening, at Professor Long's house, the conversation after dinner turned on the bust of Clytie (so called) which was in the room. The lowness of the hair, and so forth, well-known peculiarities, were discussed, when some one asserted that the width and solidity of the shoulders were over the size of nature at the age represented. To this every one agreed except Long, who said Miss Selden would measure as much, and she was barely twenty. The young lady good-humouredly allowed her neck and shoulders to be measured, the evening dress of that day being low enough to admit of that being done ; and when the tape was applied to the marble, the two beauties were found to correspond exactly.

About the period of Sibson's advent there also arrived from Edinburgh the young chemist Dr. Samuel Brown, his object being to substantiate his assertion that some of the so-called primitive substances were resolvable into each other. He held that he had destroyed or resolved carbon and silicon. He had lost his chance of a professorship in the University of Edinburgh because of this assertion, and when he came for the purpose of being examined, Faraday and others would not listen to his experiences or his views based on the atomic theory, or witness the operations he was prepared to exhibit.

He had boundless confidence in his discovery, and took a cottage out of the way, at Blackheath, fitting up an experimental laboratory there. Of no man's future greatness were many able to judge, both friends and enemies, so certainly as of that of Samuel Brown. He was born for science and lived for chemistry, but, like his contemporary Forbes, who died so young, he had varied powers. His argumentative and persuasive powers were the greatest I ever listened to, his lectures the most brilliant; his knowledge of chemistry was antiquarian as well as scientific, and no subject of investigation came amiss to him, so that his talk was a little overpowering and at first sight apparently braggadocio. It was not so really, however, but the result of exuberance and richness of intellect. While his laboratory work was going on at Blackheath, he amused himself by writing *Lay Sermons*, as he did subsequently by writing a tragedy on the subject of Galileo. In his laboratory some of us found him and his Operinus, a young fellow-student, with shaved heads: a permanent excuse against engagements to dinner or any other appointments, as well as convenient for furnace work in hot weather.

A few weeks before this grotesque seclusion of his, I had read Carlyle's *Hero-worship*, just then published, and had in a moment of enthusiasm written him a complimentary letter, as a young man will, wishing he had given a hero of art, of work: a hero of civilisation by means of adapting and applying new conveniences to life. I had no knowledge of

his persevering hatred to whatever his own family and himself had not inherited: a sort of savage animosity to refinements, that dictated many peculiar views, and deprived him of much pleasure in life. My letter began by being laudatory, but it went off into a different vein. "All your heroes are writers, but writing is not properly to be called heroic. Written speech becomes obsolete or is misunderstood, becomes dogmatic, and the authors become mystical gods. Moses by his writing, you say, built St. Paul's. Did he so? perhaps the father of Moses then laid the foundation. But did Moses write? did Socrates write? did the founder of our faith write?"

Carlyle never took any notice of this letter, but I thought afterwards on more than one occasion he never forgot it, or indeed forgave either it or another thing I did. This was a paper published with my name in an obscure magazine, a pretended discovery, called *More Letters of Oliver Cromwell*, in which the style of Oliver was satirised, and the style of Carlyle imitated. I think he resented my satire, although really showing my admiration, in the first place because I found he had spoken of the letter to Samuel Brown in a savage manner. It seemed to me I must have been at fault, and I immediately sent him, in a propitiatory mood, a little book I had published containing two poems: one called "Hades," afterwards republished under the name of "Music of the Spheres." Of the other poem, the less said the better. For this I received

a gracious acknowledgment, beginning, however, by an arrogant formula he used to repeat. "I have read the two poems over, which fact, if you knew my habits in respect to that class of composition in these times, might itself mean something for you." Then he went on, "I can with great sincerity bear testimony to the existence of a vigorous, genial, and truly valuable endowment in the writer," etc., etc. This being the case, I thought he ought to have dropped his arrogant formula. Throughout life he not only felt himself wiser and better than other people, but he had a pleasure in letting it be seen that he thought so.

Wornum was brought up a Swedenborgian, and continued so all his life: he had never entertained any question of a future life or troubled his head about the matter. Yes, it was certain that all the stories that inexplicable mystic had related were facts. He had the insight, or rather the perceptive sense; we have not, that is all. Blake had it too, very imperfectly. This was the opinion also of Dr. Wilkinson, another Swedenborgian, a friend of Wornum, who at that moment republished *The Songs of Innocence and Experience*, and afterwards a half scientific, half arbitrary or dogmatic work called *The Human Body in its Connection with Man*. Both held the physical to be a fictitious, or at least a non-essential condition of our being, in a fuller sense than religion condescends to treat it. When Wornum's uncle, an elderly country gentleman, was killed in a moment by a railway train at a crossing,

having not realised either the momentum or the speed of the new locomotive power, I asked my friend what he thought would be the result to the man. He considered the dear old gentleman would simply wake up as if a very serious accident had happened, he would for a few minutes be lost to himself, stunned, as it were, then it would gradually dawn upon him that the great change had taken place; he would find himself removed into new conditions, and gradually accommodating himself to these, he would by and by live again very much as he had done here!

Let me think of some more of the actors with me on the London stage before I left in 1844. There were two Scotch sculptors. Calder Marshall, who made a very favourable impression, a man with some resources of a tangible philistine sort, but with no more poetry, or fancy, or classic perceptions than a cow. He had none of the social failings of the artist nature, but neither had he any of the charms that make the professors of literature and the arts the cream of society. One wondered how the sensible commonplace person had ever attempted to realise any ideals, or to touch a modelling tool; or how, when he did attempt it, he had ever succeeded so far as he had. The other sculptor was Patric Park, whom I had known in Edinburgh. He had made a settlement there on returning from Rome, and amused his friends by his attempts to live cheap. First he kept a man who assisted with the wet clay, but found he either could not, or would not, broil a

beefsteak or boil a potato. He added a girl to do these things, but found, to his surprise, she was quite as good at consuming these viands as at preparing them. So he tried an old woman instead, and then he found the proverbial cormorant and fish were nothing to her either at eating or drinking. On settling in London, he had his mother and sisters with him, but lived for the most part a bachelor life in the anteroom to his studio, with plenty of whisky and emancipated talk. His abode was near the Hampstead Road, and quickly became the resort of a set greater at laying down the laws of art than at exemplifying them. These have for the most part disappeared, yet some of them were men of mark and character. One of these was Franklin, a saturnine Irishman of breeding and pleasant manners, with a face of the aquiline Cavalier type. He was an illustrator of books, an admirer of the middle ages, with a style of drawing like that of the then living Munich school. He was always welcome, and his long pipe was always on the rack with his name attached to it, because Park had a pipe-rack like those in the artist clubs in Munich. Another visitor was Theodore von Holst, whose art was a cross between Retsch and Fuseli, which latter very able inventor anticipated great things of Von Holst. There was also an element of simplicity in his composition not to be found in either of the elders. A considerable money prize, I think the last given by the British Institution, a body of amateurs then exhibiting in the Boydell Shakespeare Gallery in

Pall Mall, was awarded to his picture of the "Raising of Jairus's Daughter," a picture possibly some day to be prized again when the mummified body of that long defunct institution is unwrapped at last, and Luke Clennell's "Charge of the Life Guards at Waterloo," and other works, see the light again.

Von Holst fell in love, to use an old-fashioned phrase for a perennial disease, with a wild creature, who led him into ruinous courses. Shortly after my own marriage my wife and I went to a sort of public entertainment, on the opening of the Lowther Arcade, and there we were joined by Von Holst, who introduced a handsome, loudly-dressed young woman as his wife. I did not like her, yet she was a noble creature, who wanted not the power of fascination nor the ability to use it. To this lady he accorded what she did not desire—the same freedom of intercourse with the opposite sex that men arrogate to themselves, but she returned him an unconquerable jealousy, and it was said at last kept a stiletto secreted in the sacred hollow of her bodice for his benefit. A sudden illness, however, in 1844, when he was thirty-three, just at the time I left town for Newcastle, saved her from the chance of using it.

His pictures were exactly the kind of pictures for which our school has never even allowed a place, and for which there is no London public at all. They had originality and poetry, but of a purely romantic character, without sentiment: tragic

without anything theatrical or transpontine. Besides "Jairus's Daughter" I only remember two: "Mephisto drawing the Wine from the Table," and the "Genius Loci," a pale spirit in a fair landscape. But his sketches were the most astounding—the designs he would have liked to have carried out! One of them was "Satan and the Virgin Mary dancing on the Edge of the World"!

Of notabilities small or large to be met in Patric Park's circle, B. R. Haydon was the greatest. Park's bust of him is very fine, and exceedingly true. They shared together a mighty admiration for the Duke of Wellington, and this drew down on Park one of those silly inventions of weak brains: a practical joke or hoax, in the shape of an invitation from F.M. the Duke of Wellington, which caused an abundance of noise. One of the first men he came to in his attempt to find out the practical joker, was myself; and, as it happened, he found in my rooms a Mr. Reid, formerly a bookseller of Glasgow, whom he had already suspected of being the man he wanted. The result was a sufficiently stormy interview, followed by a series of letters, headed Bulletin No. 1, 2, and so on, and a challenge ending in smoke—happily not of gunpowder, as Park had the character of being a good shot. He was also an admirer of Louis Napoleon, whom he modelled in Paris. On his afterwards sending the marble to the Paris International Exhibition, either by accident or design, the nose was broken. The repaired marble is now in the South Kensington Museum. Handsome

and strong in muscle and lungs, he used to make one's ears ring by his vocal enthusiasm in singing the "Marseillaise," and I held his elasticity of nature and variety of ability a great loss on my leaving town. His death, some time later, was caused by an act of extraordinary though amiable folly. Seeing a railway porter staggering under a load he could not manage, he insisted on taking it, broke a blood-vessel, and never recovered the injury.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CARTOON COMPETITION FOR THE NEW HOUSES OF
PARLIAMENT—B. R. HAYDON, RICHARD DADD, AND
OTHERS—LEAVING LONDON.

THE building of the new Houses of Parliament then rapidly proceeding, the scheme of a great exhibition of cartoons in competition for proposed fresco paintings was promulgated by the Government, and a large proportion of the more ambitious or accomplished younger artists were soon at work upon them. I speak of 1842.

Besides meeting Haydon at Patric Park's, I had dined with him at the house of a cotton merchant in the city, a friend of my dear friend Tom Sibson, Francis Bennoch. This individual actually had an idea that he was a poet, and that Haydon, as he had been the friend, though not a very good one, of Keats and Wordsworth, should also be his. And I had seen Haydon's attempt at fresco on the wall of his own studio, which was in fact the drawing-room of the house he rented, where he had, without scruple, cleared the bricks and primed a large space



with gesso. It was an Ithuriel or Satan, I forget which, of heroic size and conventional character, already fading out, though only a few weeks done. We all thought he had made up his mind that the whole work was to be placed in his hands, which has since turned out to be very nearly true.

Of all men—I do not limit myself to artists—I have had any means of studying, Haydon was the most self-sufficient. There are various tempers or habits of egotism ; his was simple vanity, intellectual and personal, which made it impossible for him to regard any other man as of the same species with himself, and must have endangered his reason. He was unconsciously like a comic hero in a farce as he ascended to a well-filled drawing-room waiting dinner, for example. Approaching the door, he threw back his coat collar on either shoulder, inflated his chest, even beat his bosom to raise his spirits, and lifted his head high in the air. Had any of the men I knew been appointed at this initial competition, I believe they would have gone abroad and seriously studied the method, as I should certainly have done, and as my brother did when in Rome in the days of Cornelius and the rest ; but here was Haydon inviting visitors to inspect his faint specimen (which must at least have astonished his landlord), without ever having seen a fresco picture, unacquainted with either the early Italians or present Germans.

It was a grave mistake to begin with to propose

fresco at all. Even in Italy it had a reign of no more than a century or so. The best preserved early pictures there are tempera, not fresco: those in the Arena at Padua, for example. Eastlake no doubt knew more than any one else on the subject, but he was unwilling to advise Prince Albert against Cornelius. But what chance had Haydon with Eastlake, his enemy being President of the Royal Academy? It happened I sat opposite Haydon at dinner on one occasion at this time, when he explained the whole position from his point of view before a number of Bennoch's city friends. One master-mind, meaning himself, should have the entire control, and produce sketches which younger men should carry out under his eye! I was certain such a plan was out of the question: never had been done, and never would. Heaven help us if this had been tried! He made the laugh turn against me, but I proved his notion ridiculous. Long after, I revenged myself in a sonnet published in my *Poems by a Painter*, which I now repent of doing, if repentance for a sin forgotten by every one but myself is necessary.

Only one of the set of painters already mentioned tried his power in cartoon-drawing for the Westminster Exhibition: this was H. O'Neil, whose work was nowhere, as were those by E. M. Ward, Wornum, and myself.

My brother David came from Edinburgh to see his powerful but slight contributions placed; he repudiated the careful, bald, academic, German



practice; his two cartoons were little more than nervous and furiously rapid sketches. We walked down the immense line, threading our way among artists and their works till we encountered his own. My heart sank when I recognised them, which I did in a moment by their wilfully unelaborated character antagonistic to the prevailing and expected method. Overpoweringly able in technical mastery of drawing, their execution was dangerous, even fatal, to come before a jury with Sir Charles Eastlake at its head: a jury all biassed by the authority of Cornelius and the German revival method of simple outline. I forgot my own interest in the great importance of his. He, like Haydon, had been writing on fresco, and hoping with confidence for this trial of strength, and after all it was not originality or vigour of hand that was wanted, but it was manifestly cultivation, refinement, common sense, and the ability to meet the requirements of the committee. I had no character to lose; he had, and I felt certain he had thrown his chance away.

It was a surprising scene, new to English art, and in its immense quantity and high excellence astonishing every one. Armitage here made an able début; Cope had been previously known by a small picture of the interior of a posting-house in Italy; Selous was quite unknown, having been hitherto an assistant painter of panoramas, not an exhibiting artist; Watts, who was also unknown,

was said by the showman who carried the prize cartoons for exhibition about the provinces to have used brown packing paper because he was too poor to purchase any other ; Townsend, a surgeon now become artist, afterwards attached to the newly-established "Schools of Design" ; Zephaniah Bell was already a master in one of these provincial schools. These were the successful competitors who astonished the unexpectant and incredulous world. Instead of our being without historic art in London, it was found to be plentiful and admirable, if ignorant of fresco, that authoritative bugbear.

There was also a ludicrous element in the collection, the smallest work in which was about ten feet square. The prevailing anticipation that it would be a fiasco with nothing good in it had inspired a number of country amateurs to send performances furnishing plentiful amusement. One of these I observed enter with confidence in his face and his performance under his arm. It was drawn in Indian ink on a quantity of sheets of thin white paper pasted loosely together, the whole folded up like a newspaper. He was an elderly man whom I set down at once for a country parish schoolmaster. It was impossible not to feel for the good man when he spread it out on the floor before Sir Charles, and in an explanatory way, "It's Runnymede, sir, and this is King John in the middle ; I thought it well to celebrate the Charter, you know." The dear innocent soul ! but

Eastlake moved not a muscle, although it was incredibly bad.

When we crossed over to a restaurant to lunch, I could not help speculating painfully on my brother's expression of face, but I could not discover what impression the whole scene had made upon him; he was preternaturally still, nor did he touch his cartoons next day, but returned to Edinburgh. I wrote him on the awards being published, having seen several who had not tried, but who had known my brother in Rome, or who had otherwise entertained the highest opinion of his knowledge and powers, and who all thought it strange he had not sacrificed to his own interest, and met the requirements of the competition more closely. This is not easily done; I do not know that he could. He replied, "I must remain *strange*, as you say, or work against my convictions—be indeed false to myself. My most earnest prayer is that I die not alive." Here is the egoism I have found in every man of mark I have known. Perhaps Sir Walter Scott alone has been without it in our time.

At this Westminster Hall exhibition I saw all my acquaintances, and among them one to whom it carried the warrant of death. I mean Haydon. His two cartoons were laboured enough according to his method, that is to say, they were not careful studies of form and design, but of light and shade; they were costume subjects, but conventionally incorrect; they were a survival from the previous

generation. He walked about like a man in a dream, now and then waking up, affecting an amused manner, then again collapsing. He, the father and master in this country of high art,—not only master indeed, but apostle and martyr,—found himself surrounded by works more “scholastic,” “academic,” and so forth, than his own, executed by dozens of young men who had grown up unknown to him, and to whom he was apparently unknown. The inflation was gone; he was suddenly changed into an aged man. Every competition has its dark side: dark with a red light as of the nether pit shining through it. Youth can stand much, it takes a great deal to kill at twenty-five, but this veteran on that day was one of the most melancholy of spectacles.

Another man, one whom I had not seen for a year, was there: Richard Dadd, who had returned a few days before from Egypt. I was ignorant that a sunstroke under the pyramids had fatally changed his mental condition, and when he volunteered to walk home and dine with me I was very pleased. All was well till he rose and proposed to go about nine o'clock. I rose too, saying I would accompany him in a cab, as I had to attend a meeting of the Council of the Institute of the Fine Arts, to which I had been elected. I left the room for a moment to change my coat, when he rushed down-stairs almost at a leap and ran away! This action puzzled me at the moment, but was painfully elucidated a very short time after.

His fixed idea was that he was watched ; my offer to accompany him had frightened him. Only a few days later his father fell a victim to this mania and to his paternal care, and poor Dadd, the ablest of the Frith, Egg, and O'Neil set, was lodged in an asylum for life. This is now forty years ago ; he is still in durance, and still occupies himself with elaborate designs and pictures: peculiar, certainly, as he is cut off from every external influence, but still possessing ability.

This trial of strength, with its expenditure of time and means, the rejection of two pictures by the Academy and the British Institution, the failure of the publisher of the *Illustrated Book of Ballads*, and other misadventures, combined against me. The pictures were: "The Burgher Watch on the City Wall," representing guild brethren keeping ward, under a dim watery moon, by a blazing beacon-fire, a picture that found a purchaser next year in Edinburgh ; and "James VI., the Scottish Solomon, examining the Witches of North Berwick," a mistaken subject, which did not find a market. At this unfortunate moment I was offered one of the new appointments by the Board of Trade,—a mastership in the Schools of Design,—and I accepted it.

* * * * *

My last day or two in town were approaching.

For some time a weekly journal had been sent me which used to keep us in roars of laughter. It was called *The Communistic Chronicle, or Promethean Magazine, a journal of Communistic Life: Communion with God, Communion with the Saints, Communion of Works, and Communion of Goods*—a lengthy title, with this motto, “God is the only true landlord,” whatever that might mean. Hogg’s amusing story of the lady who lived without clothes part of every day and made her children do the same, in order to cultivate innocence, has been thought too absurd to be true. I have seen so many absurdities of this kind I have no doubt it is true, and that Shelley encouraged the good creature in her idea. At length the writer of this singular journal of communism called on me, introducing himself as the Proto-Shiloh, dressed in a black velvet blouse with a high cap to match. I told him my mind, and we parted. But the very day before I was to leave for Newcastle-on-Tyne, where I was to inaugurate a school of art, walking up Holborn I was attracted by a crowd on the pavement. Craning up to see into the centre of the mass, I beheld the thin beard and black velvet blouse of Goodwin Barnby: such was the name of the editor of the communistic journal. He was pale and agitated, hustled about, but still all vivacity, repelling the rudeness of the mob, his hands filled with pamphlets, while a covered horse van, loaded with such-like printed matter, kept close by the edge of the pavement, guided by an odd-looking mixture of crazy saint and idle compositor. Fearing he

was getting into trouble, I hailed him, and offered to assist him out of his difficulty. "I came out to circulate my papers, but am in no difficulty; and they shan't have them unless they leave off hustling!" was his reply, but it was of no use to say so. A huge hilarious coppersmith from Shoe Lane made a dash at his upraised hand and carried off the papers in triumph. Many years after I saw a poem advertised by this singular enthusiast called "The Return of the Swallow"; after a second lapse of time I heard he was installed as a Unitarian preacher. Was this a rise or a fall to Goodwin?

On my last evening in London we dined with Kenny Meadows, and John Leech was one of the party, although a very silent member. Meadows, like all the men of the world I knew, thought I was wrong to leave town. "Well, well," he said at last, "every one in London becomes shapen into his place, becomes a sort of wedge; that's what they mean by the right man in the right place; but in the country one may preserve one's natural form. But you will cease to do your best: you won't be always stunning, trying to do your damn'dest, as one may say." By and by, groping in his pocket for an old letter to light his cigar, he captured a paper addressed, "On her Majesty's Service,"—"Oh, that's like the letters you will be getting in future—but I had better read it! It was put into my hand when I went out at mid-day, and I had forgotten it," said he, laughing and sticking his glass in his eye.

"I thought so, it's only an intimation of an action for the payment of taxes! Don't trouble yourself, my dear,"—to his wife, who was becoming alarmed,—
"I'll pay of course some day, and they know they must wait. Hand me the sherry."

CHAPTER XV

THE GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS OF DESIGN—NEWCASTLE IN 1845

THE work proposed to be accomplished by the Schools of Art was a difficult one. To penetrate the working and trading understanding, to touch the hide-bound and iron-bound heart of the community that had refused for centuries to consider the arts as anything but trifling amusements, till the English workman had become the most slavish in Europe, only a "hand" obeying the dictates of capital—was a task too indefinite at first. It had been prophesied that one man in wooden clogs presenting himself to learn painting there and then, without preliminaries and with the hope of immediately making money by it, would be my encouragement on the opening night. It was not quite so, though something like this; only it was soon apparent that a considerable body of former students existed—students of a deceased academy under a bankrupt Fine Arts Society, claiming a right to draw again in chalk as they had done before from the antique casts, an extensive collection of which existed; and on the

other hand that the manufacturers of the locality wanted no art, and resisted their workmen being taught, as by that means they became ambitious and conceited. The effort had already been tried and had failed, the only result being this fine collection of casts from the antique and other materials for academic education.

I found two old women scrubbing the limbs of the Laocoon and the Apollo and other gods dearly beloved by me, and the fussy little fat keeper received me in a consequential manner, informing me with infinite candour that the place had been locked up for half a year, that the rent had not been paid for many seasons, that the half of the subscribers to the Fine Arts Society had dropped off since no exhibition of modern pictures had been held, and that I had better advertise the opening of the new classes, because the secretary was apt to forget. This candour I found to be a characteristic of the Northumbrians, and a very pleasant one. I was soon acquainted with all the committee, and found that the aid of the Board of Trade had only been called in to recover, if possible, the fortunes of the Society, while the views of the London Board repudiated the Fine Arts, and provided me with a printed table of rules, one of which was that no one intending to follow any of the Fine Arts professionally was admissible as a student, and another that drawing the human figure was interdicted! I am not inventing absurdities. Such was absolutely the case, under the management of Mr. Bellenden Kerr

as chairman, and Charles Heath Wilson as director. I hung up the rules, and broke them by my own practice.

On the other hand, geometry, perspective, and mechanical drawing were also interdicted! These I found imperatively demanded, and I engaged a master for these branches, yet had to keep the students attending such classes out of the table of returns made monthly, which sadly diminished my apparent success. Nowadays the Department of Science and Art, which has long superseded the Schools of Design, has freed the curriculum from all restrictions, and the progress of forty years has made so large a difference, we may be said to be becoming practically a nation of artists, and as able in general design for decorative trades as any people in the world.

My chairman was an old Peninsular captain who had been mayor, an amiable man with a noble simplicity of character. Such being the head of it, the committee itself might be guessed at. There was not a manufacturer among them, nor an artist, though I soon discovered there were several painters, modellers, and architects, all worthy of being there. One of the painters, Robinson Elliot, I recognised, having seen him working on his cartoon in Westminster Hall. There were indeed two contributions to that great exhibition from Newcastle, probably the only provincial town in England contributing. In truth, the birthplace of railways has been, like Norwich, a school of art for a century back nearly—

from the time of Thomas Bewick and his pupils, who all swarmed off to London. An annual exhibition had been tried there for years before such a venture existed in any other provincial centre, and not without some success in spreading a love of painting, the Society which had brought together the large collection of antiques in plaster which I found waiting me being the result.

I do not propose to relate the history of the mistakes and difficulties of the old Schools of Design: a mistaken appellation derived from the French "*Écoles des Dessein*." Immediate results were everywhere demanded, partly because of this designation. We were to teach, not drawing, modelling, colour, or the scientific knowledge of perspective, projection, geometry,—many Englishmen of that day indulging in an ignorant hatred of art,—we were directly to teach the working classes, who could not hold a pencil, to create new decorative designs, and even begin new trades. One of the first things suggested to me was to inaugurate a class for the manufacture of artificial flowers. The old-fashioned teachers of drawing too—notably old Mr. Richardson, a really admirable landscape-painter, the father of many Richardsons—wrote to the Board of Trade that the School of Design was taking the bread from them, and the Board remonstrated with me for doing what I had actually been appointed to do! Here was a position to encounter. Zephaniah Bell, one of the prizemen in the cartoon competition, W. C. T. Dobson, shortly after adopted

into the Royal Academy, and others besides myself, were all in the same boat. I was told by Charles Heath Wilson, who was made director on Dyce resigning the position, that we were to be called professors, and so forth, and behold we were nowhere. Not one member of the Board of Trade or of the Council on Education knew what to do.

At last the students at the head school in Somerset House decided the matter. Redgrave, Townsend, Horsley, Herbert—all came in as teachers there and made nothing of it. Charles Heath Wilson had his own views, and he had the whip-hand. The leading students determined he was not the man who should hold it: they protested against his management, and left in a body; a Parliamentary committee of inquiry was appointed; C. H. W. was sent as headmaster to Glasgow, and there was a lull till the successful close of the first Great International Exhibition. Then suddenly the question—give the whole scheme of national artistic education up, or extend it and strengthen the executive—was officially decided in favour of the latter alternative. A branch of the Board of Trade was formed called “The Department of Science and Art,” with Mr. Henry Cole, a man with a firm hand, a perceptive judgment, naturally a leader and organiser, at its head, and Mr. R. Redgrave as manager for Art, to work out the new director’s general views. Forthwith the sky brightened and the sun began to shine. From year to year the system improved and developed,

till the Training Class for Teachers superseded the appointments of such artists as could be got to leave town by the Board of Trade ; and we few who had been so appointed being superannuated on pensions, left the professorships and assistant teacherships of the schools to certificated men, trained somewhat like the masters of national schools.

Such is a brief summary of the history of this first attempt to make us an educated community in matters of taste. It is enough here : I do not go into it further. The old Northumbrian town was then a mixture of almost mediæval tenements with the newest splendidly-built streets. Half-timber mullioned-windowed old houses and the family mansions of county magnates were brow-beaten and jostled by great stone-built streets and detached buildings in the "Italian style" ; the town-wall towers of defence, each appropriated to its guild, were trampled down and erased by new dissenting churches bristling with crockets. And this change, which has taken place everywhere, was in Newcastle going on with accelerated speed by the extension of trade and the centralising tendency of railway travelling. This contrast of the old and the new side by side was intensely interesting. There was the old market in the open air amid rain and mud, under canvas booths and covered waggons, enclosed by hostelrys with black wainscotted parlours ; and here the new one, as yet only half inhabited, under long arcades of iron and glass, with walks appropriated to all classes of goods.

There still existed too an aristocratic quarter: a long quiet street or two, removed equally from the busy trading thoroughfares and the brand new rows of well-built houses, with modest balconies and old-fashioned little porches, where the remaining county gentle-folks made a community to themselves, as they had done for centuries. All the inhabitants knew each other, and dull, cosy whist evenings were always going on in dingy drawing-rooms full of old furniture and china, lit as much by the great blazing fires as by the still prevailing wax candles. Every county town was once a metropolis, but Newcastle, the farthest from London, was the metropolis of a very wide district, and longer continued inhabited by a large number of ancient families than any other.

Now, nearly every one of these family town-houses is deserted; nearly the last gouty old gentleman has ceased to take his constitutional on the dry pavement by the help of his butler's arm. The houses have been one after another refurbished, painted, and filled with splendid furniture and grand pianos by self-made men: men who entertain their congenial friends by declaiming against high wages, trades unions, and boards of education. There are now ten times as many carriages driving about as in the good old aristocratic times, all belonging to the men of trade. And among these there still exists the unappeasable appetite for more money, when they have already overdone their trade by increasing their manufacturing power in

the way of *plant*, which they cannot allow to remain idle. Under the idea that trade would in an accommodating manner increase with their desires, they have thus sunk a great part of their former gains. I write this in 1877.

But, thirty-three years ago, besides the exclusive sets who all knew each other's aunts and grand-mothers, there was an intermediate class equally interesting and a little exclusive too : those who had had an ancestral connection with the business of the town and its management. Some of these, in whose hands still existed shops of a common character, were very cultivated : more so than the "county people," who had no special call to know anything, but who could, like Galt's laird, who "sat all day on the louping-on stone glowering frae him," rest happy on their moderate inherited position. Among these others were the Hancocks, of whom Albany, then engaged on one of the most exhaustive monographs ever produced,—that on *Nudibranchiæ* issued by the Rae Society,—became my dear friend, as well as his younger brother John, the first man who made bird-stuffing at once a science and an art. These studies were their amusements, but the two Hancocks carried them out with a steady devotion I have rarely seen equalled. Originally from Holland, over their dining-room fireplace hung a very good old picture showing three generations of ancestors, the latest one being children, all standing in little laced coats or hoops according to sex, each holding an orange in the right hand, as in the Vicar of

Wakefield's too large family picture ; and in the drawing-room still existed a toy of the same period, representing a kitchen with every possible utensil and appliance made of silver. Long naturalised in Newcastle, all the old-fashioned ways of the place and the peculiar dishes and tea-cakes were to be enjoyed in their house, and their visitors were treated with a certain narrow but pleasing refined intimacy not to be met with elsewhere.

In families of this kind traditionary observances were to be met with, especially at Christmas or New Year's gatherings. To a clubbable or conversationable visitor, one accustomed to the quiet habits of very cultivated society in these days, such entertainments were a little surprising, like being invited to an evening's cudgel-playing ; but, on the other hand, to the good-humoured and free-tempered Northumbrians, the staid and frost-bitten London evening parties were entirely colourless and uncongenial : not unreasonably so either. I remember Carmichael, the sea-painter, who at that moment was preparing to take the metropolis by storm, after his first visit to town, saying, " I couldn't stand the dulness of a social evening—I couldn't stand it—so at last I started up and danced a hornpipe by myself ; but I was soon stopped off, for instead of anybody else following my example, they looked at each other as if they thought I had gone mad ! "

Besides curious dances, sometimes solos, at other times duets, they had rhymes uproariously repeated, in certain parts of which all the company were

expected to join, every one being acquainted with them. Some of these rhymes were accompanied by capers and slaps, and looked as much like infant-school exercises as anything else. One of the rhymes I wrote out. A lady begins it, generally an elderly lady, singing the first line in a high clear voice, the person sitting next takes up the second, the third follows, at first gently, but before *twelfth day* is reached the whole circle were joining in with stentorian noise and wonderful enjoyment.

On the very first day of Christmas my true love brought
to me

A very pretty peacock upon a pear tree.

On the second, second day of Christmas my true love
brought to me

Two turtle-doves, and a very pretty peacock, etc.

On the third, third day of Christmas my true love brought
to me

Three French hens, two turtle-doves, and a very
pretty peacock, etc.

On the fourth, fourth day of Christmas my true love
brought to me

Four corley¹ birds, three French hens, etc.

On the fifth, fifth day of Christmas my true love brought
to me

FIVE GOLD RINGS, four corley birds, three
French hens, etc.

On the sixth, sixth day of Christmas my true love brought
to me

Six geese a-laying, FIVE GOLD RINGS! four
corley birds, etc.

¹ I could get no explanation of this word.



On the seventh, seventh day of Christmas my true love
brought to me

Seven swans a-swimming, six geese a-laying, etc.

On the eighth, eighth day of Christmas my true love
brought to me

Eight maids a-milking, seven swans a-swimming, etc.

On the ninth, ninth day of Christmas my true love brought
to me

Nine pipers playing, eight maids a-milking, etc.

On the tenth, tenth day of Christmas my true love brought
to me

TEN drummers drumming, nine pipers playing, etc.

On the eleventh, eleventh day of Christmas my true love
brought to me

Eleven lads a-louping, ten drummers drumming,
etc.

On the TWELFTH, twelfth day of Christmas my true love
brought to me

Twelve ladies dancing, eleven lads a-louping,
TEN drummers drumming, nine pipers
playing, eight maids a-milking, seven swans
a-swimming, six geese a-laying, FIVE GOLD
RINGS !!! four corley birds, three French
hens, two turtle-doves, and a very pretty
peacock upon a pear tree !

The gifts being accumulative in importance, and in their character inviting noisy demonstration with voice, feet, and hands, the result may be imagined.

Albany Hancock accompanied me to a number of manufactories, which were exceedingly interesting and instructive to me, inspired at that moment by an extreme desire to understand and meet the re-

quirements of my position. An extensive ecclesiastical glass-painting establishment was the first visited. Here I found all the stages of art-education, from the limited mechanic to the accomplished artist in the person of Francis Oliphant, the principal designer, who drew out the cartoons. He was, I found, from Edinburgh, and like myself had been trained at the Government Trustees' Academy there under my old master Sir William Allan, as some others of the principal workers had also been, all of whom came about me and kept to me all the time of my stay there like a bodyguard. Oliphant was soon on intimate terms with me, and showed me a long poem by his cousin, a very young writer indeed, not then more than sixteen. This was Miss Wilson, whom he soon after, on leaving this painted-glass manufactory, married, settling for a time in London, where she (now Mrs. Oliphant) immediately began her career as a novelist with a productiveness almost unexampled, an instance of expertness in popular invention and in making bricks without straw truly wonderful. My friend Francis was altogether different. He was not an artist by natural gift as she was a writer, but he had by training and by æsthetic proclivities thrown himself into the Gothic revival which was, under the Oxford movement, threatening to become a serious antagonist to our present freedom from clerical domination. He had the ability and the knowledge to imitate the mediæval glass of the successive periods of architecture, and yet his ambition was to be a painter of

history, which ambition was fatal to him. Of a pietistic but weak nature, he gave up mediævalism in art, and had nothing else to support his pretensions to be an artist at all. His wife's literary success was sufficient to make him an idle and aimless man ; they went to Rome, and there he died.

The master of this establishment, William Wailes, was the last man one would have expected to organise and succeed in this, then entirely new, species of art. He was wide awake to the clerical and architectural proclivities of the day, and determined to serve them in spite of difficulties apparently insurmountable. He had been in trade and unsuccessful ; his reading was the *London Journal*, and his general knowledge of art nil. Yet had he the greatest delight in grand churches, and had visited many in France. This was his inspiration ; he got hold of Oliphant, built a kiln in his back shop, introduced himself to Pugin, and in a few years had a hundred men busily at work, with commissions more than he could manage.

As to my object in visiting him, he wanted no more education among his workmen than they had. He had got his artists, and did not find workmen with art knowledge or proclivities desirable. His grand object was to make his pot-metal pictures like the old ones, comparatively rude in execution, and in this he was right. He knew what his customers wanted : restoration was the order of the day. Modern art, anything modern indeed, except the *London Journal* and the *Mysteries of London*

literature, was his abomination. It was very trying to find the only branch of art-industry followed in the place repudiating my aid, and yet I was very much interested in Mr. Wailes's workshops. There I met Welby Pugin, who made in ten minutes the sketch for a large window, the slightest possible pencil suggestion of both ornament and picture, but, with the aid of the young experts to be found there, enough to come out as a large window with great success a few months afterwards. These workshops were a surprise to me. Here was the Scotch Presbyterian working-artist with a short pipe in his mouth cursing his fate in having to elaborate continual repetitions of saints and virgins, —Peter with a key as large as a spade and a yellow plate behind his head,—yet by constant drill in the groove realising the sentiment of Christian art, and at last able to express the abnegation of self, the limitless sadness and even tenderness in every line of drapery and every twist of the lay-figure. In the middle ages the artist was without conscious and formulated ideals, he was the most narrow-minded of human beings from a nineteenth-century point of view; now, we learn to resemble him through a dilettante training. At first I was surprised at the completeness of the imitations of old work to be seen in the cartoons made in this shop, knowing what vapid failures our best picture painters generally made in dealing with either Old or New Testament characters, and at last I was driven to the conclusion that all *schools*

—Raphael's school, Rubens's, Titian's, or any other school—must have been just such an atelier as this. Had Wailes been himself a Raphael or a Titian, what might he not have accomplished, with his immense commissions and opportunities, before other competitors had entered the field?

Next in interest came potteries, in all of which the potter's wheel was still to be seen, "one of the venerablest objects, old as the prophet Ezekiel and far older." Some of these, the turners' wheels, were spun round by a pedal on which a girl bobbed up and down with a regular action, her long gilt ear-drops flashing about. These potteries were far behind the Staffordshire, and the glass-houses were also of an inferior class. Brass foundries and iron foundries we also visited. In Stephenson's railway engine factory entire wheels of welded iron were lifted out of the furnace red hot, and four giants, "strikers" they were called, with mighty sledge hammers strode round them, striking in succession. I afterwards introduced this action into the last picture I did in the series illustrating the *History of the English Border* for Sir Walter Trevelyan.

In an iron-smelting and refining works, again, I found a rather surprising application of design. Great masses of incandescent metal were lifted out of the furnace in ladles moved by cranes, which ladles threw the masses into pressing-machines made in the shape of dragons' jaws which opened and shut, turning the metal over as if chewing it, till the cube was compressed into

the required shape. By the sweat of the brow, and by the power of steam, verily were men to live here. And what did they care for drawing and design? Repoussé or tooling of any kind, cameo and intaglio, and so on—did they know anything about them, either in metal or earthenware? Not the least. Every workshop had its specific, but not carried out by individual handiwork; they did not want new things, could not make trials, all was wholesale. Since then the aspect of things is considerably changed, but at the time I felt myself painfully in a false position.

CHAPTER XVI

NEWCASTLE PEOPLE—BEWICK JUN.—LUKE CLENNELL
JUN.—MY LAST SIGHT OF MY DEAR FRIENDS
W. SHAND AND TOM SIBSON.

LET me describe some of the people I met. The Northumbrian abruptness and apparent rudeness that no one took the trouble to hide at first led a stranger to fear he was an intruder, and perhaps individuals with any kind of mission (except lecturing) are really looked upon as intruders by the genuine native, but the plain manners and plain speaking certainly saved me a world of misunderstanding and trouble.

The man in the history of the locality of whom Newcastle was then most proud was Thomas Bewick the wood-engraver, although the living heroes of the moment, when railways were beginning to spread, were the Stephensons; and I soon found that the rough humour of the vignettes in Bewick's natural-history books, the sententiousness also, and the many indications of wild winter weather and stormy seas, are fully appreciated only after living in the north. His little house close by St.

Nicholas's Church I had been led to as one of the lions, and I had found it a thoroughly interesting place as showing me the workshop of the wood-engraver contemporary with my father's more extensive and varied atelier of a similar kind, combining as they both did artistic work and the commonest trade. The one was the lineal descendant of Albert Dürer's factory in Nürnberg, who unquestionably printed and even sold his own engravings; the other of that of Jerome Rösch, the *formschneider*, who required little probably but a bench and a stool. Rösch's obscure abode, reached by the Fräuingässlein, nevertheless gave rise to a proverb by Kaiser Max frequenting it to see how his triumph-waggon wood-blocks were progressing. "The Emperor still often drives through Petticoat Lane,"¹ and Bewick's small workshop, out of which so many able apprentices came, has become important in the history of English art.

One stormy, snowy evening, when, in the midst of my many unceremonious pupils, I felt very much as one may suppose a naked foot to feel in a hornet's nest, Albany Hancock's handsome face appeared advancing up the gallery, followed by a heavy, slouching, able-bodied countryman, as I thought, about fifty-five or so, with an absent, bewildered expression of face, the snow still lying white on his

¹ These visits of the Kaiser to the artist are distinguished by another anecdote. Rösch was fond of cats, and these cats, sitting on all the seats or tables, did not put themselves about when the Emperor called; hence, it is said, arose the adage, "A cat may look at a king."




penthouse eyebrows. This was Robert, the son of Thomas Bewick, who had some of his father's talent in the technique of the craft, but none in invention or design. To this man I felt drawn in a singular degree, mainly by the almost reverent simplicity and diffidence of his manner, which evidently prevented him adequately and freely expressing himself. I had been told he was busy drawing and engraving figures of fishes from nature, with the intention of completing another division of natural history that might in some measure, though in a limited way, go with his father's celebrated volumes. I spoke of this—Hancock, I knew, being one of the encouragers of the scheme. He looked at me, then all about the gallery, as if in the presence of some perplexing enigma the solution of which was to be found somewhere about, and then answered, "That's what I would like ; but I don't know—maybe I canna ; but I should like it if I durst." This was so candid, and so touching in its modesty, I could not help contrasting it with the pretension current and necessary in the circles I had left in London. However, I found afterwards a very unpleasant cause assigned for this diffidence. His father was not satisfied with Robert's powers—old Thomas being an autocrat, and a little exacting in his requirements from his son as well as from his pupils. I found also that his father had projected the book on fishes.

Between the rough honesty and simple manners of Robert Bewick and his father's genius I found a close relationship. There was a comfortable health

about him, and the snow unmelted for a few minutes on his eyebrows and clothes reminded one of the enjoyment the paternal sketcher had in depicting mid-winter with its frozen covering of white. Robert was one of the last remaining adepts on the small Northumberland bagpipes, and we were shortly after invited to take tea at a friend's house for the purpose of hearing him. He appeared, carrying the union-pipes under his arm, accompanied by two tall old-fashioned maiden sisters; but when the time arrived for his performance, he seemed as scared as some men are who have to make a public speech, and was evidently inclined to run away. Our host, however, who knew him well, proposed that he should tune his instrument on the landing outside the drawing-room door, which was a formula he appeared to understand; and after the tuning he played there, and we heard him perfectly, and applauded him much. The ice thus broken, he soon gained confidence, re-entered the room, and walked about excitedly playing Scotch airs with variations in the loveliest manner on that most delicate of native instruments.

One of the street characters about Newcastle at that time was a brother of John Martin, the inventive painter of "Belshazzar's Feast": not the one who set fire to York Minster—a third brother, quite as mad as the incendiary, but more innocent. He was habitually to be met in the principal thoroughfares, generally with a pamphlet in his hand, which he was willing to dispose of. He quickly recognised me as



a stranger, and offered me the chance of enlightenment, in such a way, however, as did not make me respond ; but a few weeks later, walking with the Peninsular hero, my chairman (who had become very friendly with me, as he found me a good listener), we encountered the well-known figure in his extraordinary skull-cap decorated with tortoise-shell, and a military surtout closely buttoned to the throat. Captain Weatherley, as his manner was, received him in the friendliest way, and listened to the information that Martin's claim to the invention of the High-Level Bridge then building over the Tyne—a railway scheme designed, if I remember right, by Stephenson the younger—was now in print, and would be forwarded to the Queen to-morrow ! He then introduced me as a great London artist come to educate the people of the north, when Martin, with exaggerated politeness, drew his feet together, bent forward, lifted his tortoise-shell hat high in the air, and answered, " Gratified to meet you, sir ! I am the philosophical conqueror of all nations, that is what I am ! and this is my badge " ; at the same time unbuttoning his surtout he showed a medal as large as a saucer, which was hung round his neck by a ribbon. It was not a medal at all, and he was manifestly crazed, yet he had that about him that made one treat him with respect. A noble presence even was his, although he was poor enough to sell his pamphlets thus on the street, which pamphlets were of course only evidence of his craze. Shortly afterwards he disappeared. I understood his brother

the painter had taken care of him by carrying him up to London.

Poets were not wanting. Years even then long past, considerable attention had been excited by a poem which appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* on the great novelty of the day, "The Steamboat," by Thomas Doubleday of Newcastle. There was also a long paper on Bewick the wood-engraver in the *Edinburgh Review* by the same. I was very interested to meet Doubleday, but I found an unresponsive elderly man of a severe aspect, from whom the muses seemed to have flown away and left him immersed only in politics and the coal trade. A younger man, and perhaps a truer poet, introduced himself. This was Luke Clennell, son of the painter, who was then a student at the newly-instituted University of Durham. He had, with other juveniles, started a quarterly journal—a rather ambitious undertaking,—and called on me for aid. He was a short man of Herculean build and bluff face, full of energy, and possessed of an impulsive mental force which I feared from the first moment I saw him. His father, as every one knows, was Thomas Bewick's most talented pupil, who left engraving for painting, and took the prize offered by the British Institution for a historical picture, the "Charge of the Life Guards at Waterloo." In consequence of this he was employed by the Prince Regent to paint the assembly of the kings and plenipotentiaries then in London after the Peace—a portrait-subject beset with so many difficulties that it assisted to drive him out of his mind.

His son had invested his little fortune in a schooner, and had gone several voyages to the Baltic and elsewhere ; but tiring of this, which, however, had suggested subjects for many poems, he had now, approaching middle life, sold his vessel, and entered himself at Durham, determined on taking holy orders.

Here I visited him in his rooms in the ancient castle of Durham, turned into students' quarters. They were approached by a real Norman arcaded passage, and here he at once locked his door and began to read me endless poems made on the places he had visited during his voyages. These showed considerable facility in composition, sound health of body and mind, and unaffected descriptive powers ; they were exceedingly interesting works of an autobiographic kind, but like so many similar productions, otherwise wanting both in a *raison d'être* and that inner sense and completion that constitutes such productions works of art. Over his charming little corner fireplace there hung a water-colour portrait of the Duke of Wellington, evidently from the life. In this I observed some points of great exactness of observation, particularly the continued attachment of the lobe of the ear to the jaw, which distinguished that organ on the head of the Iron Duke. Rising to examine this in an interval of the incessant talk and recitation, I saw the drawing had been violently torn in two and mended again. In an impulse of curiosity I asked him how that had come about. At once a dark cloud came down over

his eyes ; he covered his face with both hands, and for a few moments was evidently moved profoundly, occupied, it might be, as indeed he was, in prayer. I learned afterwards that such was his habit when reminded of his father's affliction. Hesitating how best to act or speak so as to show my sympathy, or to appear not to observe his agony, I was relieved by his recovering himself at once ; and he then told me that the drawing was one of the studies for the last picture his father was engaged upon, "The Assembly of Plenipotentiaries after the Peace," and that in a moment of failing reason he tore up this and other preliminary studies. "My dear friend, innocently and unknowingly, you have touched the central sore in my life ; but it is over." He said this, concluding his narrative, and was turning again to his poetry when a tremendous assault of heavy heels against his oak made me start to my feet. He started up too, but arrested himself half-way to the door, and returned laughing. "It's only horse-play—horse-play of some of the juniors ! I get it every now and then !" When I assured him my nerves could not stand that when engaged quietly writing, whatever his could do, he changed his ground a little—said he really did not know who they were who made the assault on his door, and it was only intended for amusement ; but I began to think of him as my own old favourite St. Anthony pestered by the devils.

This abode at college did him no good. He was not spared ; the seeds of his father's malady had

been sown in his constitution, and their development was helped, it may be, by his solitary study and prayerful rumination, as well as by the "horse-play" to which he was subjected by a set who disliked him. At the approach of the same year of life—the thirty-fourth or thirty-fifth—at which his father broke down, his mind gave way in a similar manner. He was lodged in the same asylum in which his father had ended his weary days, dying in his son's arms, and there I visited him a few weeks after his retirement. The doctor had told me that smoking was his great amusement, so I took him a dozen cigars, without, however, altogether approving of the habit, and was confirmed in my disapproval by his immediately beginning to smoke, lighting one from another as long as I remained, all the while explaining to me as a secret that he wanted to get away to Kirkwall in Orkney, where he knew a spot on which he would found a college to show the world what a perfect institution of that kind ought to be. Taking his Greek New Testament from his pocket, he showed me the fly-leaves covered with minute writing. "That's what I shall teach," said he; "you must get me out of this." But I had no power to get him out; his was a hopeless case. A melancholy story this is, one which moved me profoundly; and, strange to say, contemporaneously with Luke Clennell's breaking-up one of my elder students went the same sad road. He was a man of twenty-five or twenty-six, possessed of some genius as a sculptor, who sent up to one of the exhibitions at Westminster

Hall, to which competitive works in sculpture were invited, a vigorous group of Actæon devoured by his dogs—a subject of evil omen!

These were cases of sudden alienation of mind, but in both these men there previously existed inexplicable peculiarities—peculiarities connected too with their best powers of a productive kind; and the longer I live the more general I find among men of specific genius a dangerous vacuity in those ordinary faculties that go not only to realise success in life, but to keep the whole nature healthy. The sound mind in the sound body is necessary to the greatest genius, and must underlie the powers that give us the *best*, the permanent productions in every walk; but just under these come the intense concentrated works that rise into a certain aimless splendour unrelated to the common sense and well-being of common men. The producers of these last fill me with fear: fear for their future, their old age.

One of these latter men now [1846] suddenly appeared in Newcastle; this was my dearest friend in the early Edinburgh days of the *University Souvenir* and late indulgent evenings with excited talk and frantic plans of revolt against family ties and the ways of middle life. W. A. C. Shand had been nearly ten years in St. Petersburg; we were both of us greatly changed. He had been required to bring a pupil over to be entered at Cambridge, when he found he was on the books of the police, and was refused a permit or passport to return. In the course of some betting and card-playing, it appeared,

he had struck and challenged a man he considered a cheat who was a Government official. I never made out the true story, but the individual who now presented himself was in a state of excitement, impossible to be approached by me without the most deleterious effect on my own mind. He was again due in Russia, and the passport to go thither was denied him. He could not rest a moment without talking of this, and at night could not go to bed because he could not sleep, and when I left him in the early hours I continued to hear him in my little library pacing about and talking still—talking to himself. His poem on Greek Muthos was finished and in his portmanteau, but he had forgotten it: it was nothing to him under this personal vexation and humiliation. I tried to interest him in it again, but it had passed into a mere literary tradition in his mind. Here is the ending of his long and sometimes over-laboured, but often exceedingly beautiful work:

These Attic love-haunts where my soul hath been,
These stately pageants of that elder day,
In temple courts through pillared pomps withdrawn,
White on sun-guarded hill or shadowy lawn,
In haunted coves and bowers of myrtle green,
Where wakes the timbrel to the soft essay
Of pious maiden to their mysteries sworn,
With smoke of incense at the break of morn;
Or learned poet with dark cinctured hair
Calms with fine lyre the still oracular air,—
Gone now! the white-limbed deities are gone,—
And from the cold north clouds of terror rise.
Valhalla throws agape its gates of stone,
And Odin looks on me with loveless eyes.

But verse exhibiting merely accomplishment in the moment of mental tribulation loses all interest even to the author himself, and indeed has often so little relation to life that even a few years disenchant it, as I find on copying these few lines. A few years pass, and our point of view of any work of art or poetry is changed by experiences of actual life.

Weeks passed, even months, and his distraction increased. I began to feel as if I too was losing my sanity, when, by the influence of his important friend in St. Petersburg, his passport arrived. We parted on the river in the dark, by the side of the vessel bound for the Baltic. "Oh, what it is to have to guide myself!" he said, in a low voice; "if I could always have you with me—but I should have been born a woman!" With that he mounted out of my sight for ever, and I was rowed back to the quay. Alas! so ended the first great passion of my life, the first and greatest friendship. And I would like to add here a few verses I wrote many years after and published in my latest little book. It is, however, only my reading of his character as it might have been.

In early morn he rose elate,
Rose up with the strength of ten;
We recognised a king of men.
He would not linger, could not wait,
Opened at once the golden gate,
And entered to the unlit shrine,
Poured out, yea, drank the lustral wine.

But soon he found daylight more fair
Than the closed sanctum's darkened air;

That the world outside was wide ;
That in all time there is a tide ;
That it is best to serve the call
To do what's waited for by all ;
That it is something less than sane
What has been done to do again.

Back he turned without a sigh
And threw his magic passport by.
He said, " I am not asked for there ;
My harvest grows, it seems, elsewhere,
Upon another hemisphere."
I wait him still, but wait in vain ;
We shall not see his face again.

The second friend in importance, Tom Sibson, who has already been mentioned as a fellow-artist in London, also came to me in my new locality in the first year of my residence there [1844]. He came to Newcastle, worse in health and nearer his end, with his brother, Dr. Frank, and his best friend, W. J. Linton, taking care of him, to embark from the Tyne for Malta, then a favourite place for consumptive patients. His abode in Munich during a cold winter had been to him the fatal cast of the die. He too I saw sail away, and thus he too was "withdrawn," to use the euphemism of Emerson—withdrawn by the cold waves of a stormy sea in that autumn season. He died a day or two after he arrived at Malta, and I sent a brief notice of him to S. C. Hall for his art journal. This was printed three months after his death, in the number for February 1845, saddled with a note from the pen of Hall, apologetic for the highly eulogistic tone of some of

the sentences. This was the sole record of a man of distinct genius in pictorial design, whose short career had been wasted by the necessity of gaining a temporary livelihood by etching, among other things, a series of illustrations to *Humphrey's Clock*, and other novels of Dickens. When Forster's elaborate life of that popular writer appeared, I hoped to find that either Dickens himself, or Forster, "the Beadle of the Universe," or perhaps Maclise, their daily associate, the greatest history painter of England, would have noticed the power and humour and artistic mastery of these volunteer illustrations. But I was disappointed; there was no word of recognition. But they were entirely different from those in the books themselves by the astonishingly facile Phiz, whom I had met at the evenings in Patric Park the sculptor's studio. He was an unmistakably able and quick-sighted artist, but he owned that he never carried a sketch-book, and never made a memorandum from nature in his life! The difference between Phiz and Tom Sibson was that between a slight melodramatic after-piece that makes us break into a burst of laughter, but which leaves no impression, and the mature work we enjoy in the closet and never forget. Sibson's etchings, besides, were not much more laboured than those by his more fortunate compeer, only his mind was stored by his habit of daily sketching; and his knowledge of the furniture of life and of physiognomy, derived through the 1400 pencil-scrapes he had made from nature, had enriched his mind beyond com-

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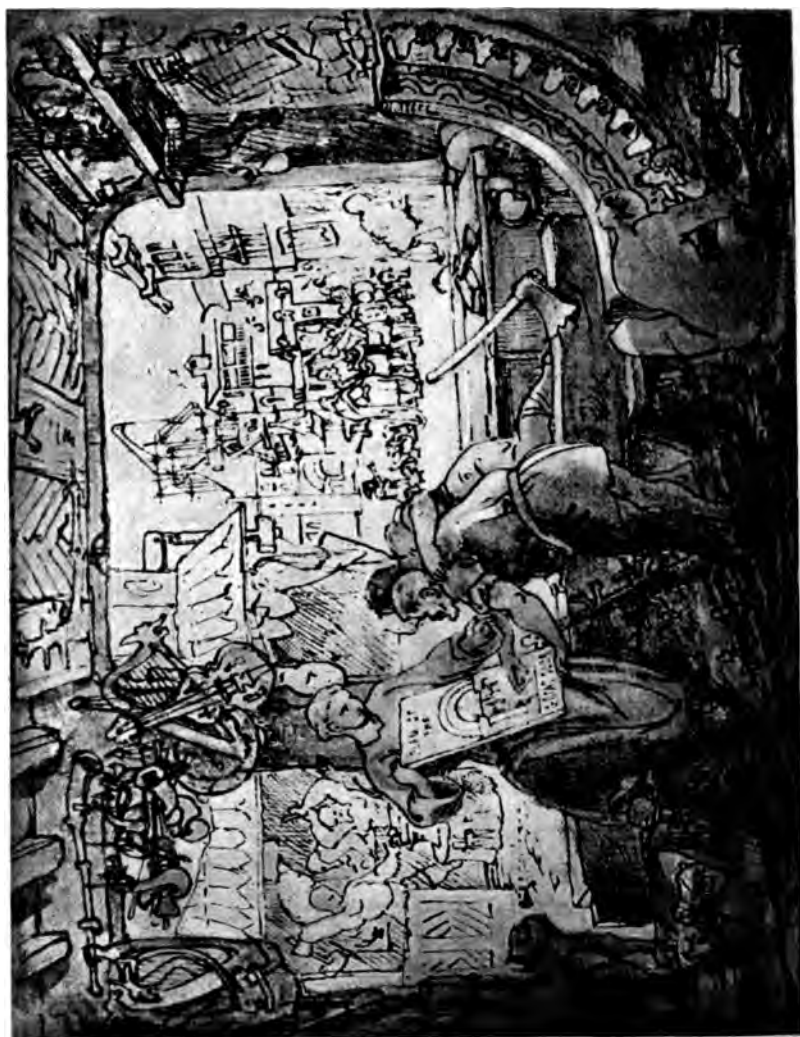


Illustration by Albert R. Rose, Designer.

from the by C. W. Brown



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parison. That I do not talk at random, or foolishly overvalue a friend's talents, I must give here an example, such as I can find among my remains, from his hand. The one I select is a wood-carver's or carpenter's shop in the days of the Heptarchy or in the period after the Conquest, one of many designs he did for a scheme, never carried out by publication, planned by W. J. Linton: an illustrated History of English Civilisation.

To return to Newcastle people. I have mentioned the name of T. M. Richardson, or, as he was there and then called, Old Richardson, the head of the Newcastle painters, as Old Crome was of those of Norwich; both landscape-painters and self-taught men, inspired with love of art by love of outdoor scenery, and both accustomed to talk of "nature," as if vegetation and the earth that produced it were only properly so called; body and soul of all living things being only of social origin and consideration. He was a persevering and perceptive painter, opening exhibitions to improve public taste on his private responsibility, and a strong little man with a worse digestive apparatus than Thomas Carlyle. His surroundings had been ungenial, and his family or families, for he married more than once, too numerous; teaching occupied him more or less every day of his life, yet he continued to paint large as well as small pictures, and when the North of England Fine Art Society fell into debt, he tried to do their work. But when I appeared with an

organised system, he complained to the Board of Trade that the School of Design had taken away his bread. His teaching, like that of all the craft throughout the provinces of England at the time, was exclusively landscape, exclusively colouring at once with the brush, and exclusively by successive tints: first lesson, sketching the picture in, and laying on a wash of bistre or Paine's gray; second lesson, doing the sky, and so on. It was partly to revolutionise this false position of both teacher and pupil that the Schools of Design were established: the two systems could not very well coexist.

William Dyce, who had edited the official drawing-book, and occupied the place of director for some years, came down as inspector. I had met him in the old days in Edinburgh, and my brother David had travelled with him in Italy, so that we were not strangers. I found he had been very much discouraged by his experiences of the directorship, and did not scruple to let me know he did not see how the Government schools would effect their proposed end; but I found he was just as hopeless about his own affairs, and about the prospects of historical art in connection with the Houses of Parliament. He was at this time employed on one of the pictures in the pavilion at Buckingham Palace, and very freely expressed his vexations with Sir Charles Eastlake, who had negotiated the affair, honorarium included, with Prince Albert. And really as he described his position it was almost a ruinous one: he had been several times out to Windsor, lost many days in

town with Sir Charles and other people, had made sundry sketches and small designs, had completed a cartoon full size before beginning the picture, and after the painting was finished and placed, the sum he was to receive was only a hundred pounds. Such were the prizes of that day, 1845, flowing from the highest successes—successes other than popular. More than twenty years after, I found Maclise as little content with his results, at the end of his second mighty historical picture in the Houses of Parliament. We know that the commission for the execution of the Wellington Monument for St. Paul's was the death of the greatest sculptor, except perhaps Flaxman, we have had in this country; and perhaps we may say the building of the Law Courts killed the architect, my dear friend Street. It would appear that the modern artist in this country, either by his own defect or by that of the patron, cannot work happily for the State.

Another leading painter in this northern town, of course dealing also with landscape, was Carmichael, a good specimen of the ready, energetic, indefatigable Northumbrian. When he sold a picture in London one year, 'nothing would stop him: he would leave the provinces, cut out Stanfield, make his fortune great and his name immortal. So he left us for London, "the grave of small reputations," as it has been truly called. I could not venture very far in persuading him to stay at home, having myself just left the metropolitan competition, and he was not unknowing in the ways of the world, but

thought he could take the place to which he aspired. He was bluff and generous ; had a considerable library, and a hospitable board. Indeed, I scarcely expected to find an artist (not a portrait-painter) having a household so well appointed as his was, and a friendlier and more honourable man it would have been difficult to find. The secret of his manner of life had been that his little sea-pieces were so popular he habitually made a good deal of money in the course of the year. Dealers used to take his small pictures, a dozen at a time, to the universities and elsewhere, and at this time boating-men had a tendency to indulge their taste in pictures as well as boats, so that they competed for "Carmichaels." One morning I went into his studio and found eight or ten small pictures fixed up before the fire to facilitate their drying. Looking from one to another of these and finding them essentially all the same—representing mid-day, a fresh sea, blue openings of sky amidst breezy white and gray clouds, a yacht, and a fishing-boat tacking or going before the wind to the right or left,—I suggested that he might indulge in a change now and then, and so give us morning or sunset, storm or dead calm. His answer at the time posed me considerably, but it was a wise one, showing the sound mind in a sound body. He affirmed that no one would buy the kind of art I described for art's sake ; that ordinary people would only buy what they saw and enjoyed every day, or wanted to enjoy : the fresh sea, mid-day with a blue streak in the sky !

Two or three hundred pounds were subscribed to present him with silver plate when he left. I went to the meeting, when the vicar made a flowery speech, and upset the painter for the moment by his allusion to uprooting the tree from its native soil ; but when all the hand-shaking was over and only a few of us left, ladies who had been in the background came to the front, among others the mistress of the hotel in which the meeting was held. She was a handsome young widow, and when she was handed forward to examine the silver plate, Carmichael, who had quite recovered his spirits, made a dash at her, seized her round the neck, and gave her such a sounding kiss as dispersed the company in a burst of laughter.

I find in my records of this time an anecdote or two which varied the monotony of my diary at the time, and may be worthy of preservation. One was from the mouth of the worthy chairman of my school committee, the Peninsular captain ; the other was related as a personal experience, also by an old gentleman, a contemporary and friend of his, in after-dinner talk. The captain's story was this : during some part of the Peninsular War one of the difficulties of the officers was to get shelter and fodder for their horses when the day's march was done, and the troop had to make the best of such accommodation as could be had. Once arriving for the night's quarters at a large deserted convent they were searching about for straw or hay, when his man called out he had found it in plenty. Weatherley

ran to secure it, and found a vast pile of straw in the end of a long room, the refectory perhaps. Into this heap he at once thrust his arms to carry off as much as he could grasp, when he found his fingers encounter something at once soft and offensive to more senses than one. On further exploration they found the straw was but a covering, and there lay the bodies of all the monks and others, soldiers or peasants, killed or murdered by the retreating French.

His friend was an engineer who had lately returned from St. Petersburg, where his professional services to the State had some years before brought him to survey what he called the Old Palace. A polytechnic school was to be accommodated there, and he had to make a plan of the suite of rooms to be appropriated to that purpose. In doing this he found there was a space unaccounted for; a room without any means of access he found was the explanation of the difficulty. He went from one authority to another, finding the greatest reluctance to assist him out of his dilemma; he could do nothing, however, without solving it, and applied to the Government itself, and at last got permission to open a way into the mysterious chamber. The easiest way was to take the back of the chimney out of a neighbouring room, which accordingly was done. A great opening was made; the workmen gave way and allowed him the honour of entering first. He found the levels were different; he had to jump down, and was enveloped in the dust of forty years. The room had little furniture except a large bed in great

disorder, the bedclothes having been trailed down by the side of the bed ; this was the room in which the poor insane Emperor Paul had been murdered. The door of it had been built up at the time. Novelist-like anecdotes, but neither of the relators had any invention or any desire to surprise ; they were simply incidents in their experience, I believe.

CHAPTER XVII

MY BROTHER DAVID—MY LANDSCAPE HAUNTS IN THE NORTH

THE summer exhibition of 1844 at Westminster was not of the same interest as that of the previous year, which was a surprise to the country. This second competitive collection of works was mainly for fresco painting, a method more difficult to the English artist than to any other, totally unknown to him practically, and alien to his habits of oil-painting, in which he distinguishes himself by those technical qualities of transparency and texture impossible in fresco, resulting as they do from successive repaintings and glazings. Our English pictures have the charm of a more varied and refined expression of surface than can be seen, or at least could be seen until very lately, in any other school. The German painter of the Munich school, which was, as a school, the result of a systematic renaissance of fresco at the hands of the noble band of men who were at once religionists and romanticists, was the best in drawing, it might be, but the worst in colour in Europe. He undervalued colour as a vulgar and sensuous adjunct

that civilisation gets rid of in actual life, as in dress and other appliances, and which the artist strong enough intellectually should, unless under certain specific conditions, despise ; to him therefore fresco came easily and gratefully.

In no other country has it been revived ; Prince Albert had something to do with the attempt to resuscitate it here, and the result was a failure. My brother was in Rome when the German masters were practising there. He took some trouble to understand the method, and was perhaps the only Englishman who then did ; but it is the simplest and most primitive art practically, so every one besides Haydon ventured upon it, and the lives of some who continued it for many years, having begun extensive works which required to be carried through, were made a burden to them. This was really the case with William Dyce ; Maclise similarly suffered from the so-called glass-medium. Wall-painting in this climate has been a curse to all who have tried it. Since that day I have myself had a share of the difficulty, and got pretty safely over it, at Wallington, by executing my pictures on canvas in oil and fixing them up with an air-passage behind them ; and afterwards at Penkill, where I had to paint on the wall itself, I used wax and turpentine, applying heat ; encaustic, in short. This was nearly, but not quite, successful.

I visited Edinburgh by the mail-coach over the snowy Cheviots, no railway being then open, to see what my brother proposed sending. He had done

a *portion* of a design, literally a fragment : the upper part of one figure leaning on and looking over a wall, and the lower portion of another, a pair of legs, standing on it. This was indeed admirably painted, one of the very few trials of true fresco that appeared in the exhibition, but it made no impression whatever, except to excite some mirth on account of the two halves of figures represented—mirth which to him was entirely inexplicable !

The family was now reduced to three : David himself, who had built an immense studio, ugly as a Methodist chapel, in which ever-increasing life-size works were accumulating ; old Uncle George, who used to teach us the correct Scottish sound of the alphabet and make our pop-guns of former years, who had now resigned his autumns on the moors and all his dogs ; and our mother—a quiet and melancholy household. The whole day was spent by David in his studio, and the two elders went slowly and silently about the house, a quietude having taken possession of them which spread even into the kitchen and to the watch-dog Zeno, an immense creature whose head lay generally out of the kennel on the way to the studio, the only motion it made being that of opening its great eyes as we passed. I was impressed with a foreboding of evil. My brother's mental habits were becoming more and more alienated from his profession : not from art itself, but from the amenities of the picture-loving public. His tremendous power of hand, which in rapid sketching always reminded one of Michael-

angelo, not imitatively but by instinct and by similarity of nature, was now associated with a sad and painful sentiment that made it impossible for him to express any joy in life upon his canvas; and without this possibility modern painting is nowhere, it has no *raison d'être* to the public mind, and to the ordinary picture-fancier it is a reproach and a byword. The technical pleasure in his work was gone, his health too was gradually breaking; what to another man might be described as the breaking down of the delusions of life, was to him the disappearance of his private ideals, and what then would remain? The strangeness of the position of one who as artist and critic respects the work which prudentially he sees ruin in producing, both of us were fully conscious of. I did not require to speak out with many words to be apprehended by him, nor did he need to tell me that what he tried to accomplish, and none other, was *possible* to him. For this was he born. The sublime and not the beautiful, the tragic and not the lovable, was his sphere. Alas, another sad truth I must record here, for then it was that he confessed to me, his face hidden on my shoulder, beside that studio stove, the unhappy love-affair that had torn his heart for years, a love that still hopelessly dominated his virginal nature. This little sentence must represent much.

Notwithstanding all I have said, there had now gathered about him, making his studio a rendezvous and a place for illustrious strangers to visit passing through Edinburgh, a circle of friends, some passion-

ately attached to the man and others curiously interested in his genius. A leader among these was Dr. Samuel Brown, who had now returned to Edinburgh and got married, and with him his cousin the author of *Rab and his Friends*; Mrs. Crowe, the authoress of the *Night Side of Nature* and the translator of the *Seeress of Prevorst*; Professor Nichol, of the *Architecture of the Heavens* style of thinking; and besides these, Kirkpatrick Sharpe of Hoddam, Dunlop of Auchendrane, and others, men of quite different characters, whose point of sympathy was only attachment to the character of the painter of genius who had lost his way. The house in which he lived was Easter Dalry, a small secluded mansion on the west side of the town, with a considerable paddock and ample garden. It was just such a house as that in which I was born, the rooms in the same manner panelled and painted white, only it was more secluded in a considerable extent of ground. One day as we were sitting over our frugal luncheon we heard the high strong voice of Samuel Brown directing the movements of a party somewhere about, and by and by we saw the sanguine speculator loom into view, followed by Mrs. Crowe and half a dozen others all furnished with forked hazel sticks, prospecting for water on the paddock. At his laboratory that morning some dispute had arisen regarding the virtues of the hazel wand still in use in Devonshire, and here was the party endeavouring to discover by experiment. Of course, in no case could all present be brought to

agree as to the action of the stick ; and here again, I, as a stranger brought into sudden contact with such empirical experiments, felt keenly that Brown in science was, as my brother in art, wandering to the confines of Hades. Here I may reiterate what I think I have said in a former page, that Samuel Brown stands alone in my experience of men as an eloquent critic and accurate thinker. He and my brother David represent to me analogous powers in science and art. Yet were they both doomed to failure by the want of certain common everyday qualities. Brown's discovery of the resolvability of some of the now-considered elementary substances came to nothing ; his tragedy Galilei Galileo was only pastime. Neither of them did themselves justice, and both died in mid-career. Mrs. Crowe too, his almost maternally affectionate admirer, broke down under the strain of excitement in a large measure resulting from his intercourse. Indeed all the set disappeared before their day was properly done : Professor Nichol died not long after Samuel Brown ; and Dr. John, as we called the author of *Rab and his Friends*, fell into a mental state not so hopeless as that of Mrs. Crowe, but equally fatal ; yet he was, when I knew him, the sanest of all, the adviser of every one.

Not many months after this visit to Easter Dalry, the good old uncle died. The latest favourite creatures he was constrained to abandon were his pigeons. These he long managed to attend to, keeping them in a loft in the top of the house

furnished for them with openings through the slates. This place he approached by a broad easy ladder placed on the landing of the upper bedrooms. He was not so very old—seventy-eight, I think,—but his lifelong lameness and stiffness of one leg made him uncertain on his ladder. Regardless of this impediment, he continued to carry up to his capuchins and croppers their daily corn, till one day, after a partial illness, he lost his balance somehow, fell back, and was picked up “none the worse,” as he affirmed when he came to himself again, but shaken completely. He was never allowed to try the ascent again, and soon passed his days only dozing by the fire. It came round into spring, he tried to go out to see if the birds were building their nests in the same places as last year, but he could not walk very far. So he dozed by the fire a little longer, and at last his life disappeared in sleep. The stillness of the household deepened.

To be the slave of duties, business engagements, and occupations alien to our morbidities or meditative habits is a great safeguard, a stroke of good fortune to many, although we invariably think it the reverse. I make this sapient reflection apropos of my position compared with that of my brother. I was a busy man, distracted by many objects, and I added others of a light kind by way of amusement. I took to collecting local antiquities in this rich border country, and published *Antiquarian Gleanings in the North of England*. I entered the Anatomy Class of Dr. Embleton in connection with the University

of Durham, and went every morning at half-past seven for two seasons. I began painting landscape again, being attracted thereto by the historically interesting and very picturesque locality available in the North of England. The first good friend I made in these northern parts, unrelated either to Newcastle or to the School of Art, was the representative of an ancient Cumberland family, the Loshes, or, as anciently called, the Arloshes, of Woodside, near Carlisle. The entailed property and mansion then belonged to Miss Losh, who had lived long in Italy studying what very few ladies have ever studied—antique and mediæval architecture, attaining to a thoroughness of taste and power of intelligent design altogether singular among women. Miss Losh of Woodside I still think entitled to a place in artistic dictionaries, although the buildings she raised were only to serve her local ends, and were mainly reproductions. I believe, indeed, Dr. Lonsdale has given a notice of her life in his *Worthies of Cumberland*. Before the revival of church architecture in connection with ritual and reactionary theology, her little Byzantine Church of Wreay was a notable performance. Its general simplicity and able symbolism introduced into its modest decorative features show some of the highest qualities of art. The mortuary chapel in the churchyard is a copy of the Chapel of Perranzabuloe—the chapel in the sands, Romano-British, they say, brought to light in Cornwall shortly before the time Miss Losh was building,—and the schoolmaster's domicile was a repro-

duction of a house in Pompeii. This last, I fear, had to be afterwards altered; but these and other things were at that time a surprise to her contemporaries.

A mile or two off is the village of Wetheral, a perfect village with an old church having a contemporary yew beside it, in a churchyard overhanging the swift river Eden, the opposite side of the stream being walled with red sandstone cliffs perforated by caves; and a little higher up a cell for three monks has been hewn out in the vertical rock. This is, so far as I know, a unique example of a monastic settlement, for such it must have been, though popularly called the "safeguards," under the supposition that the long apartment that can only be entered by a temporary wooden platform, with its three recesses for beds behind, had been constructed for storing valuables safely away in time of war. The long apartment is furnished with a fireplace and two little windows—very desirable for comfort in daily life, but not so for a hidden storehouse. The soft stone wall of the chamber was covered with incised initials. We are apt to consider this egotistic trick of inscription by pocket-knife a vulgarity of the modern tourist, but here I found dates running as far back as the sixteen-hundreds. Curious it seemed that the idler was to be found here amusing himself at the very time that Covenanters were being shot at their cottage-doors, or Laud was losing his head on Tower Hill.

Not very good for the landscape-painter are the

coal-pit villages, colourless and repulsive, and yet interesting in many ways. A hard and precarious life creates noble natures. Then antiquity and to-day seem somehow to harmonise in some of them; in Jarrow, for instance, the dust of antique civilisation is blown in the visitor's face, mixed with the grimy powder of the pit-heap, and the large, strong, serviceable women, old and young, running with their lumps of dough to the common oven in the middle of the village, look like the tradition of a thousand years, when Bede might see them from his cell when he ventured to open his little casement covered with parchment or talc. There is no sense of hardship in continuing the life to which the uneducated are born—the hardship is in being taken away from it. I was told a workman and his wife were sent away to the Bay of Naples to occupy some engine-driving situation, such as he had done at Jarrow. A year after, his employer, visiting them, asked his wife how she liked the lovely climate and the splendid country, but she shook her head: "Ah well, sir, no doubt it's all very pretty, but it's no' like our old place!"

The fishing villages, again, show the same types of men and women, but under very different conditions. Among the fishermen the women occupy a predominant importance. The men merely fight with the elements. The women carry the fish to market, and fight all the battle of life. Their full and heavy creels at starting return not much less heavy with groceries and finery for the family; all

the clever work is theirs, in the opinion of their loafing husbands. In Scandinavian countries respect for the female prevailed; the morality of the sexes was infinitely higher than in the more luxurious civilisation of the warmer southern lands. And so we find a corresponding difference still existing. The intellect, moreover, is more self-asserting in northern countries. In these poor fishing and coal-pit villages religion is curiously active; the methodism that dies out in the neighbourhood of city expenses and ritualism flourishes. Go farther south—ritualism blossoms out into fantastic ceremonial, religion becomes observance; pass to the south of Spain and Italy—religion has become superstition, and in Africa it dies into fetishism. Religion is climatic.

One summer I spent my holiday six weeks at home visiting these and other localities. I was "but a landscape-painter," and found how happy a contented soul might be so spending his life, were it not for the ambition of doing great things in art, of intensifying the impressions directly received, of accepting the doctrine "Art for art's sake," of *improving upon nature*, indeed. But, alas, on the other hand, not to do so is to be obscure, to take no place in the exhibition-room, to lose the approbation of *the town*.

Midway between the eastern and western busy shores of our hard-working island I found myself in the old-fashioned, sleepy town of Hexham, and settled down in a small apartment in the half-timber hostelry

called the White Horse. This apartment was over the porch, and the front of it was one continuous narrow casement, with a long bunker seat under it, looking out on the quiet market-place and great church, once a cathedral, partly destroyed by the Scotch, but still large enough for all the inhabitants of the town. This long window, with the casements opened, and this market-place seen without, was my subject, and the landlady's daughter posed to me at full length on the window-seat knitting. Transplanted from my world of books and daily attempts to lift up and educate a community without a fulcrum for my lever, with ambitions of my own, and speculations as yet voiceless, I entered into the homely daily life of the narrow circle, and soon began to know the bellman and the beadle, the apothecary and the mercer, and to recognise the domestic damsels, each one at her regular moment coming for the daily water to the fountain. Then the sun was always shining, my casement was always open, the pigeons and the jackdaw, the *familiar*—a quite innocent one—of the market-place, sat on the sill looking at me in their sidelong bird fashion. Every quarter of an hour the great clock of the cathedral chimed soberly—one for the quarter, two for the half, and so on till it struck the hour. I began to think it said this, accenting the first word of each line :

Now must I show my power—
Here it surely comes once more—
Now must I declare the hour—
Day and night, and o'er and o'er.

At noon, before the last stroke of the bell had ceased to vibrate, the clatter of wooden shoes and the hubbub of children's voices showed that the school doors had been opened. Into the wide paved space they tumbled, Esaus and Ishmaels starting to fight over the horse-trough, splashing the water about, and pairs of good Davids and Jonathans keeping their arms round each other's necks. The tall maiden Isabell, my model, by and by disappeared to cook my dinner and to eat her own, and when my hour came I very often found a roasted duckling smoking before my solitary plate. This hostelry was scarcely ever disturbed by traveller, except on one day, the market-day of the week, yet the landlady, who had had her cares, having lost everything sixteen years before, when her son was banished for forgery, cheerfully said the world had been very good to her; she had now something in the bank of her own again, her son was now a prosperous man, and she was looking for his return. My evenings were the sad times of my days. I had brought a bagful of books, particularly Thackeray's *Humourists of the Eighteenth Century*, which I began quite to loathe as the forced laudation of a junto of semi-civilised pedantic witlings. I tried to write little poems to express the various phases of the day as they passed, but I could not; I was too much occupied with a quite other kind of poetic effort, and from that day to this I have had the desire return upon me to represent the truths that seemed to surround me.

to express without rhetoric the impressions of passing incidents on a mind at ease. Such writing must come voluntarily, it cannot be haled in neck and crop: some day short poems may come spontaneously, as the harvest comes with autumn, and they will be welcome as my harvest-home. After many abortive trials at such poems I used to go to bed tired; the little town had gone to rest before me, there was absolute stillness, only the church clock still lived.

Here it surely comes once more,
Day by day, and o'er and o'er.

When I had exhausted Hexham I began another subject: a vicarage garden about two miles off, the walks to and from which were pleasant enough, marked on my going by the dark short tree shadows from the high sun and by the passing of the small stage coach unrolling as it went the continuous trail of dust, and on my return by the early red moon rising over the ripening corn. The charm of the secluded vicarage of St. John's Lea, who shall express, except in tuneful verse? It was approached by the church-going path under heavy trees, the turf below dotted with violets, foxgloves rising through the hedge. First you saw the ivied end of the chancel, then the ivied tower, next a stile, and the south wall of the parsonage matted over with jasmine and roses. The only inhabitants were two maiden ladies of seventy or so, who had been born there, and who had passed the last

thirty years in the house by the indulgence of the patron of the living, since their father, the vicar, went among "the still folk about the church there," as they said. The parish had now scarcely any inhabitants, and the officiating clergyman lived in Hexham, having duties there as well. The house belonged to the primitive days of the Reformation, or shortly after, when the kitchen was the family dining-room. It was still the largest room in the suite, preserving its ancient *dressoir*, an ornamental piece of dark furniture with carved edgings to the shelves and carved panels below on the press doors. The room on the other side of the tiled passage was the parlour, and here on the small heavily-framed panes of the windows were many names and dates of inhabitants long gone: an inscription or two were on the glass in a crisp fine hand contemporary with the poet quoted; one was this couplet—

Indecent words admit of no defence,
For want of modesty is want of sense.

Singularly inconsequent reasoning! the bard of Twickenham suggests an excuse while he is telling us the fault admits of none. Midway between Killigrew and Fielding, wit or humour was apt to have a foul odour. Pope tries to bring vice into discredit by declaring that it showed the want of what every one then most highly valued—that it was, in his neat colloquialism, only a "want of sense."

Both of these interesting old houses are now gone; the White Horse having succumbed to a builder's speculation, and the early vicarage to ideas of family refinement required by the incumbent.

CHAPTER XVIII

PUBLICATION OF A POEM, "THE YEAR OF THE
WORLD"—D. G. ROSSETTI

THESE few descriptive particulars regarding places on the English side of the Border must suffice. However interesting to the idly inquisitive traveller, descriptions of scenery or antiquities are among the weariest kinds of reading, so I shall not indulge myself in any retrospective glances abroad, where picture-galleries and other art matters would not, I fear, add to the charms of the record, except to the professionally interested. English history-books of the old type, dealing only with wars and changes, leave an impression on the mind that a few hundred years ago the entire business of men was murder; but my visits about these districts, formerly so disturbed, left a totally opposite impression. I found furniture that had existed where it now stood through centuries of peace and safety; I discovered in old presses or aumbries in Carlisle Cathedral embroidered copes that must have lain there folded up through all the struggles of martyrdoms and polemics. At that moment I wanted to

paint a cope in a historical picture of many figures and considerable size, "The Trial of Sir William Wallace at Westminster," so I immediately called on the Dean—Dean Tait—and requested to be allowed to borrow one of the splendid pieces of crumbling brocade, gold, and needle-work. He was at first incredulous of their existence, highly curious about my discovery, but—would not lend them. Perhaps I should have stolen them.

My peregrinations abroad, now that I look into my notebooks, certainly brought me into the sphere of passing history, Paris being always on my line of march; but Louis Philippe, Louis Napoleon, and the last of the Tuileries, Kaulbach at Munich and Dr. Keideloff at Nürnberg, left no result on either my character or my interest in life, and the result of all my visits to Italian picture-galleries during three tours has been to decrease my love of painting and my respect for painters. Michaelangelo remains alone on his pedestal. All the rest, from the archaic tempera operative to the academic decorator, impress one as mental slaves—slaves of the church or the studio, men who had no hearts and no knowledge out of the shop or church. How does the traveller begin to loathe the Madonna, and the infant strangling birds or holding fruit it cannot eat, the SS. Anthony, Francis, Sebastian, and all the rest! Should they not be all swept into the wallet that Time carries at his back, alms for oblivion? Why indulge the modern dilettante spirit by preserving the

labours of craftsmen who never had an idea in their brains except such as were brought there by their clerical employers? From the hands of the Italian painters of successive ages came the development by slow degrees of the art itself—a natural development, we may say, of the technique, and with that development came a certain amelioration in æsthetic feeling, resulting in a Christian purism nearly equally unconscious, but that is all. Naturalism at last supervened, the steps of the long process being historically and critically interesting; but among them all I find no one striking out in any way—no poet, no innovator, no rebel. They took their commissions, and their materials were stipulated, their subjects defined, and they were little better than the Greek artist Didron saw covering the wall of the church on Mount Athos, as far as intellectual liberty is concerned. And now these works, shunned by the educated native as the evidence of a past tyranny that would still, if it could, dominate the national spirit and repress improvement, are lauded to the skies by foreigners, we English in particular, who have none but dilettante associations with them.

There is not the same absence of individuality and manhood in the early artists of northern schools. They adorned their altar-pieces with backgrounds showing extraordinary love of actual nature. Van Eyck signed his pictures *Als ich kanne*, showing that he identified himself, his mind, and his fortunes with his art. Albert Dürer and Cranach hailed

the Reformation; some of the Little Masters were tried by civil law for not believing in the plenary inspiration of the Bible. These were men; the Italian painters in everything but painting were cretins; out of the workshop we cannot tell if they had any aspirations, misgivings, idiosyncrasies, enlightenment.

All this is very unprincipled on my part, I daresay, but from my early school-days I had conceived the idea of doing something to render poetry subservient to new motives and ideas, and although adolescent judgment has shown me that poetry is not the appropriate agent for such work, and that, moreover, however wrong the world is, I have not been born to set it right, I still look back with pleasure on my innocent enthusiasm and on the secret faith in myself, and I still feel a similar antagonism to any form of art or any dogma that in no way aids advancement—social, scientific, artistic, or religious. Progress is a law of nature, as well as gravitation. Such a childish idea as the value of “unity of faith” tractarians maunder about has an effect upon me like that of a red rag on a bull.

This desire to benefit the world made me write religio-didactic poems. The study of metaphysics brought out a singular development in this line in the shape of the rhythmical prose effusion I have already described, recounting the search of a mighty angel throughout the universe to find the Almighty, the cause of all. By and by a further declension

brought me to believe that the desire for perfection implanted in human nature should be confined to this world and to time. Civilisation has done much ; it will do everything. The steps we, or rather Nature, has or have made in the æons of ages past will be continued in the æons of ages to come. There was still a remains of the faith in our own times as being ready to open suddenly into more than even the French Revolution had indicated. At least in my mind such a creed took shape, and I tried secretly to realise the theory in immortal verse.

This was in the spring of 1846, when the incessant activity of London was still strong within me, and when the anatomical lectures of Dr. Emberton, our professor, having passed beyond the portion of the human body artistically interesting to me, I had desisted from the early attendance upon him. But my poem was reserved for evening work ; the morning was applied to other purposes, particularly to the study of wild-flowers. In these March mornings I was up and out by half-past six or so in Jesmond Dean. The aconite and the yellow flower of the coltsfoot began my series of sketches, and by the end of April the number had increased so fast that my greatest activity was left behind. I mention this beginning of the day which had so much to fill it of an official and professional kind, and the rewriting of my poem, which occupied me till far into the night, as certainly showing an overwrought and even dangerously feverish state

of body or mind, or both. I had never ventured to read it to any one, and I set about printing it without consultation either, so unreasoning was my proceeding. From that time to this I have been unable to understand myself for some time at that period. By the end of summer it was printed, published, and still-born. I spent my vacation in Paris, and presented a copy to Victor Cousin, who called upon me on receipt of it. I was now thirty-five, the *mezzo cammino* of the earthly pilgrimage, with no time to lose! So I felt at that preposterously early age, an age at which we know really little except by books, a time of life possessed only of the little knowledge that deceives us into foolhardy opinions and wilful ways. Even genius such as Shelley's cannot supply the want of the wisdom of years; his action was like his philosophy, always *jejune*.

However, I am not about to undervalue my poem, "The Year of the World." It was my first and last important act of literary enthusiasm, and quite an honest one. I had no desire to set the Thames on fire, nor any belief that I could do so; I only obeyed an overpowering desire, having been always ambitious in my poetic subjects, and having always nursed a superstition on the subject of long poems on great and important motives. My action in this matter was analogous to that of my brother David, who would paint only the size of life. My poem was divided into five books, treating rather the different forms of religion underlying the periods

of time occupied by the civilisation of the world, than the concrete forms of civilisation itself, which would have needed a book infinitely larger than my poor little allegorical epic, which was after all only one hundred and thirteen pages. In this short space I, however, attempted to travel over a wide field, even from the golden age of the Garden of Eden, the period of instinct and innocence, to the end of the race, when, all the adverse powers of nature subjugated, man will have attained a happy and quiescent immortality. The motto I placed on my title-page was this: "The night of time far surpasseth the day, but who can tell when comes the equinox?" This motto I attributed, rightly or wrongly, to Sir Thomas Browne. The close of my cycle of time in "The Year of the World," a Pythagorean term used to signify the entire passage of human life on the earth, was thus from one golden age to another golden age, when perhaps a higher creature than man would have succeeded him.

I may add a few words more about this ambitious work which had nearly floated out of my remembrance, because I find on reading it again that it still possesses vitality, and is worthy of affectionate recall; and that being the case, I may hope that the reader (if these notes ever have one), having very small chance of seeing the book itself, may be interested. I considered the life of the race as the life of an individual; my allegorical individual was Lyremmos, who falls from the Instinctive life, and descends into bewildered Consciousness by the

separation or new birth of Reason and Understanding—by eating of the Tree of Knowledge, in short.

The second part was the "Doctrine of Contemplative Absorption." This I accepted as the earliest Oriental form of religion proper, *i.e.* distinguished from fetishism. The third part dealt with the "Doctrine of Self-Elevation," which represented the Hellenic culture, in some measure destructive of what had gone before, but raising philosophic Reason to supersede mystery, and endeavouring to ensure contentment by means of philosophy. This is not a very correct view of the total result of Greek thought, but at all events the school contented itself with the impossibility of the attainment of any truth save through the refinements of cogitation. In the second part, as expressing the "Doctrine of Contemplative Absorption," I paraphrased a portion of the Bhagavat Geeta, and to do the same for the "Doctrine of Self-Elevation" I gave an adaptation from the Golden Verses.

Part four approaches the Advent and the "Doctrine of Divine Love." Lyremmos hears the voice that calls, "Great Pan is dead!" and in the land of Egypt

A youth sits singing on a fair flower-field,
Of marvellous beauty and of strength unknown.
Naked as at his birth, save that his neck,
His ankles, and his wrists, bore many strings
Of diamond and of amber, and his hair
Fell back unto his loins, with fragrant oil
Anointed.

This youth is singing Orphic rhapsodies, and modelling in red clay from the hollowed ground "small lares and penates infinite," when the Holy Family appears, and the Infant-God overpowers him with his revelation. This is perhaps the best portion of the work, and I hope my problematic reader will allow that the author, struggling with unplastic materials in his daily exertions for Schools of Design, might congratulate himself when he sent out the first copies to his friends. The fifth part is called, "A true Beginning found at last : Science working under Revelation."

At this time also I was preparing a very different publication, *Antiquarian Gleanings in the North of England*. That was nothing, being only a matter of business. But I had some curious and some interesting letters about the poem : for the most part only interesting, however, in relation to it, and to myself privately. G. H. Lewes wrote to me : "Long ago I have seen reason to believe that such a poem in the present day can only be a more or less ingenious failure. The nation has no creed ; the poet cannot therefore find a response." The critical notices were, even to the author, amusing in the highest degree. One said : "The poem would be altogether *caviare* to the general. It will never have more than one or two readers in ten thousand. Mr. Scott is, however, to have his exceeding great reward in some good or other it is to do." This shows the complexion of nearly all, but to verify the proverb, "Save us from our friends," one or two

written by men I knew gave me my deserts. I had bought two small houses in order to build a studio at the back of one; the other I let to a Mr. M'Liver, an editor of a paper struggling towards extinction. He was a melancholy man of evangelical proclivities, and resented my taking up so different a position. "After considering over this book," he said in his paper, "and trying to gain some clue to it, we have come to the conclusion that it has no possible elucidation, but that it has been the result of some fortuitous circumstances: an immense quantity of sounding lines and sentences have been thrown together higgledy-piggledy—made *pie* of, in short—and then printed in such confounded order as chance produced." I, the author, could even afford to be amused at this; but it was not in the best taste, seeing we had a chance, troublesome in such circumstances, of meeting as neighbours any day or every day. However, I did not come down upon him when he gave me a small chance later on.¹

There existed at this time at Leeds an impulsive enthusiast of the name of Phillips, better known as January Searle, his *nom de plume*. He wrote me a very different sort of opinion, and made me acquainted with the work of Emerson, then beginning to attract attention. He asked me to let him send my poem

¹ This Mr. M'Liver—respectable newspaper editor, but altogether an outsider in literary matters,—failing to make his paper survive, left the north, succeeded in some other locality by starting one of the daily penny papers then springing up everywhere, and is now a silent member of the House of Commons. He is the only individual mentioned in these pages, as far as I remember, except indeed an artist or two, still alive; long may they and he survive. (1883.)

to the new philosophical American, but I did not give him the trouble. I did so myself. I had sent it to Carlyle and to Samuel Brown and other Edinburgh friends, but neither he nor they—some of them early and intimate friends—ever took the reasonable step of acknowledging it.¹ As to Emerson, I had a pleasant letter from him :

DEAR SIR—I received on Saturday your book, with the kind note accompanying it. I certainly did not read the poem through at one sitting, but I found that it concerned me very much, and there is good prospect of its continuing to do so. I have read in it a good deal yesterday, with high pleasure ; but I have not finished it, and have yet no tidings to send you beyond this acknowledgment. I add, however, that it was a great satisfaction to find the Bhagavat Geeta, which I unwillingly left in my library at Concord, here fairly and wonderfully understood in England. But I will give you at another hour some account of my speed with the poem.—Respectfully and thankfully yours,

R. W. EMERSON.

Shortly after he arrived in Newcastle on his lecturing tour, and much to the mystification of George Crawshay the ironmaster, his host during the visit, asked for the author of a poem called "The Year of the World." This brought us together,

¹ Carlyle in his *Reminiscences*, now lying on my table, gives a corroboration of my experience of this peculiarity of Scottish manners, evinced indeed by his own silence, and that of my friend Samuel Brown. He says he sent six of the few copies reprinted from *Fraser's Magazine* of *Sartor Resartus* to friends in Edinburgh, and "from not one of them did I get the smallest whisper even of receipt—a thing disappointing to human nature." It is difficult to understand why the "kindly Scot" should be so brutal, and amusing to find Carlyle doing the same himself. I wish he had written his true opinion of my book ; it would have been something like M'Liver's ! (1883.)

and I found a lovely and noble American nature—a man of a type I had never met before, a man to honour and yet to be at home with at once, a wise and childlike nature who wanted no recognition or sympathy, modest, and yet altogether self-contained. He was in some sense like my ideal of the future man, who will shake off much that troubles us and occupies us in the present. I was very pleased to have met him, because he went from us to Edinburgh, where he was almost entirely among my friends; Samuel Brown being his daily companion, also my brother David, who painted his portrait, a half-length picture, now, through the agency of W. J. Linton, hanging in the library at Concord. After that intimate and sympathetic companionship he vanished from these modern Athenians for the rest of their lives. About friendship he himself has said: “When much intercourse with a friend has supplied us with a standard of excellence, when he has become an object of thought, and whilst his character, retaining all its unconscious effect, is converted in the mind to solid and sweet wisdom, it is a sign to us that his office is closing, and he is commonly withdrawn from our sight in a short time.” I fear that he has not here said exactly what he meant, but he certainly seemed to act on this unloving and unpoetical theory; never word from Concord reached us on his return home. I sent him the *Memoir* which I published after the death of my brother, without reply; yet when he was again in England a few years ago, more than twenty years after our meeting

at Newcastle, he remembered these days, and came to see me twice at Chelsea. For my own part, having once come so near a man as to recognise the nature of his life, and find interesting his aspirations, his struggles, and the kind of harness in which he equips himself, his fortunes and his doings have to me ever after a dramatic and psychological fascination. Thus it is I write much of these notes, I may say, though as yet they have been mostly about myself.

Every relation of life, however, exhausts itself. Experiences change each of us; we gradually obey new motives and believe in diverse creeds. A continuity of intercourse after its originating causes have differentiated each of the two individuals becomes burdensome, upheld only by external advantages, prudence, or the ties and laws of marriage; but parted friends coming in contact at long intervals are like the characters in a play, the living drama maintains its interest at every reappearance. Friendships, moreover, are of even adverse kinds. Those of the thinker and literary amateur are of all others most likely to be set aside by time. Those that spring from similarity of tastes and affections, expressing themselves in habits of feeling rather than of thinking or working, may be perennial. We may often have to cry "Retro Sathanas" when we find ourselves mistaken, but seldom do we become indifferent.

Within a few days of the advent of Emerson's letter I received another of a different complexion,

and bearing at the time little interest, because the signature was wholly unknown to me. It was dated 25th November 1847, from 50 Charlotte Street, Portland Place. It was very long, written on the quarto sheet then becoming rare, so I shall accommodate it to these laconic pages by giving only an abstract. The letter began by saying that the writer had not without considerable hesitation ventured to address me concerning a matter about which he was extremely anxious, and on which he could see no prospect of obtaining any satisfactory information except from myself.

A few years ago [he said] I met for the first time (in a publication called the *Story-Teller*) with your two poems, "Rosabell" and "A Dream of Love." So beautiful, so original did they appear to me, that I assure you I could think of little else for several days, and I became possessed by quite a troublesome anxiety to know what else you had written, and where it was to be found. Seeing that the two poems were extracted from the *Monthly Repository*, I went to the Museum, where I found a set of that magazine, but met only with a paper on Art. This, however, gave me no cause for regret, since the object of my ambition is to deserve one day the name of painter, to which end I am at present a student of the Academy. I read this and felt grateful, but unsatisfied. However, patience meets with its reward. At the beginning of the present year I fell in with a most inadequate paragraph in the *Art Union Journal* which informed me of the publication of "The Year of the World." I was about to bid you imagine my delight, but that would not be easy. I rushed from my friend's house where I had seen the announcement (for the wretched thing was no more), and having got the book, fell upon it like a vulture. You may be pretty certain that you had in me one of those readers who read

the volume at a single sitting. A finer, a more dignitous, a more deeply thoughtful production, a work that is more truly a *work*—has seldom, indeed, shed its light upon me. To me I can truly say that it revealed “some depth unknown, some inner life unlived.”

This appreciative criticism from an unknown but evidently poetry-loving correspondent pleased me much after my insulting notice from my next-door neighbour Mr. M'Liver.

Further than this, my new friend had seen in a monthly magazine then edited by Mr. Heraud, who was then a poet in repute, a mention of my very small first separate publication, called “Hades, or the Transit,” which, however, baffled him to get possession of, and he goes on to say that he spends so much time trying to find other works by me, he had determined to write to me direct, and so no longer allow his hunt to interfere with his studies and occupation, as it had lately done. Would I give him any information about my other compositions I had published, and excuse this, but for his profound admiration, unwarrantable intrusion?

This generously enthusiastic letter took me by surprise. I was, it seemed, not destined to be wholly unknown at a sufficient distance. It was signed Gabriel Chas. Rossetti—not an English name, but one soon to be better known. These my early poems he had mentioned have each a distinct specific character, which from time to time attracts people given to research, and makes them fancy they have

discovered a new man. I have had other similar letters, the writers of which have disappeared again in the ebb and flow of life ; but Rossetti, who very soon after began to sign himself Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Christina and Maria his sisters, and William his brother, from that day to this have been all very dear and near to me ; the two men have often been to me like brothers, and every autumn one or other of the four came to us for a few weeks. What I wrote in reply I cannot now say—I had just returned from Belgium and the north of France, and had many engagements ; but in a few days the post brought me a bundle of MSS. for perusal, which I opened with something of his own avidity. I thought his letter showed no common boy ; but what was my wonder and perplexity when I found the “Blessed Damozel,” “My Sister’s Sleep,” and other admirable poems, marshalled under the title of “Songs of the Art-Catholic,” still making sunshine in the shady place of my memory. It may easily be allowed that I must now have written with extraordinary delight. The mastery in rhythm and the invention in these poems were both equally astonishing to me, especially in a youth of manifest immaturity, as apparent in certain peculiarities evidently cherished as his favourite characteristics. But the title applied to the poems collectively—“Songs of the Art-Catholic”—was most perplexing. To one who had written and published a long poem founded on the progressive development of humanity, a believer in the three watchwords of the French Revolution too, it seemed

that somehow or other the Oxford tractarianism just then distracting weak intellects had possibly already undermined that of this wonderfully gifted boy! I looked forward with anxiety to meeting him.

CHAPTER XIX

HOLMAN HUNT'S FIRST STUDIO IN CLEVELAND STREET
— ROSSETTI PAINTING THERE — POETS OF THE
MOMENT.

BUSINESS connected with the Schools of Design took me up to London about Christmas 1847-48, when I lost no time in calling at Charlotte Street, Portland Place. My correspondent was not at home, but the elder Gabriel was, and would see me. I entered the small front parlour or dining-room of the house, and found an old gentleman sitting by the fire in a great chair, the table drawn close to his chair, with a thick manuscript book open before him, and the largest snuff-box I ever saw beside it conveniently open. He had a black cap on his head furnished with a great peak or shade for the eyes, so that I saw his face only partially. By the window was a high narrow reading-desk, at which stood writing a slight girl with a serious regular profile, dark against the pallid wintry light without. This most interesting to me of the two inmates turned on my entrance, made the most formal and graceful curtsy, and resumed her writing, and the old gentleman signed to

a chair for my sitting down, and explained that his son was now painting in the studio he and a young friend had taken together : this young friend's name was Holman Hunt, a name which I had not heard before. As the short day was already nearly spent, I could not go there at once. The old gentleman's pronunciation of English was very Italian, and though I did not know that both of them—he and his daughter—were probably at that moment writing poetry of some sort and might wish me far enough, I left very soon. The girl was Christina, who had already at seventeen written, like her brother, some admirable lyrics, nearly all overshadowed with melancholy. Melancholy I call it, but perhaps the right word would be pious sentiment. At least in her mind piety and sadness went together, and have done so all her life.

A day or two later I found Gabriel (who was never called by any other name than Gabriel by his relatives and intimate friends) and his fellow-artist, who was no other than Holman Hunt, whose studio it was : a room not very commodious for two, furnished with the then inevitable lay-figure in all its loveliness. They were both working in the quite novel manner of elaboration as yet untalked of, kept secret apparently, but which even next year began to make a noise in the world and to raise a critical clamour, principally through the work of Millais. Unprepared for any peculiar character, I looked upon these two as following their lights and imitating the early manner so well known and much



Christina Cassella when a child.

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and dates.

2.

3. The second part of the document is a list of names and dates.

4.

5.

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beloved by me in the early performances of the Low Countries I had then lately seen in the Belgian Galleries. Holman Hunt's picture was the "Oath of Rienzi over the Body of his Brother," designed with every modern advantage in composition and expression. I saw at once he was an educated artist, and a very skilful one; still there was the Flemish elaboration of the primitive days: his lay-figure was mounted on a table, kneeling, and I was made to observe that the chain mail in his picture was articulated perfectly, and as an armourer would construct it, every ring holding four other rings in its grasp—a miracle of elaboration.

Rossetti, the man I had come to see, was painting a subject wholly in the spirit of the poems which had reached me under a cover inscribed "Songs of the Art-Catholic." It was "The Girlhood of the Virgin." I thought at the first moment: "He is an Italian, a Romanist of course, worshipping that young Nazarene, the 'mother of the body of Christ,' painting her and St. Anne from his own sister and mother; and here was St. Joseph without any joinery work, he had apparently turned *vigneron*—a prettier trade; and here too was really the third person of the Trinity—not the symbolic dove with outspread wings that we moderns see in Masonic diplomas and what not, but a natural dove, only within a nimbus, sitting on the vine." The propensity to laugh was strong in a Scotchman who had absorbed in juvenile years the *Philosophical Dictionary*, although he had tried his

hand poetically in a semi-mediaeval poem, or four poems, called *Four Acts of Saint Cuthbert*. But admiration of this daring performance of a boy turning what was naturally a lyrical subject into a picture, and this his first adventure in painting, was something quite new. I saw at once that he had possibly never before used even a piece of chalk. He was painting in oils with water-colour brushes, as thinly as in water-colour, on canvas which he had primed with white till the surface was as smooth as cardboard, and every tint remained transparent. I saw at once, too, that he was not an orthodox boy, but acting purely from the æsthetic motive: the mixture of genius and dilettanteism of both the men shut me up for the moment, and whetted my curiosity for all the year till I should see them again.

Holman Hunt's picture had no pre-Reformation character in the subject or invention, only in the manner, in the elaborated detail; he had actually introduced a fly, as we see done in some early Flemish portraits, to show how minute the artist's hand could go.¹ These early Flemish portraits were painted exactly at the period of the invention and sudden perfection of engraving, when the production of such an example of miniature detail as the "Knight with Death and the Devil" astounded the northern art-world; and here it was

¹ I should like to see this picture again, to make sure that the fly, which was somewhere on the foreground, very near the edge, is still there. If it is not, he has eradicated it by some later impulse.

again affecting painting. Every movement has its genesis, as every flower its seed; the seed of the flower of Pre-Raphaelism was photography. The seriousness and honesty of motive, the unerring fatalism of the sun's action, as well as the perfection of the impression on the eye, was what it aspired to. History, genre, mediævalism, or any poetry or literality, were allowable as subject, but the execution was to be like the binocular representations of leaves that the stereoscope was then beginning to show. Such was my conclusion on thinking over that first visit to Hunt's studio—conclusion as to the execution, that is to say.

Although I saw no more of these two men for nearly a year, this meeting was the beginning of a new interest of life to me: from them sprang a knowledge of many men, and of other fields. My having left London was really the result of disappointment, not so much in my chances of coming to the front and making a good position, but disappointment in the art and poetry of the day: I had become indifferent to working my brain in any perfunctory struggle for popularity. My social circle was not sufficiently interesting. Poetry seemed to be going extinct. Bailey's *Festus* and Ebenezer Elliott were ceasing to interest, and no successors appeared in the field; no one even paid much attention to Tennyson when he published some new volume. Hunt and Rossetti and all their circle made me almost regret having left London. At the same time some other men I then met I may

mention. Coventry Patmore had published his *Tamerton Church Tower* and sent it me. It was a little volume, very respectable, but scarcely lovable, though his verse was accomplished. It belonged to the class of books, since then numerous beyond counting, that have no good reason for existence. Ebenezer Jones was another who had sent me his book, *Studies of Sensation and Event*, which had more vitality, but less poetry. His excellence lay in his aspiration, and in a perception of more than he could express. Ebenezer Jones was a young man already falling into old age, yet he was groping wildly about him, and impatient of obscurity, yearning for two things, both likely to escape him—love and fame. The politics of the day were irritating and consuming him (as they irritated and hindered his friend, W. J. Linton), partly because he had no destiny or occupation that supplied either pleasurable excitement or a field for ambition. He was a noble barque without a compass or pilot, breaking himself to pieces against the passive difficulties of darkness and a narrow sea. To his many pains, in a temporary passion of admiration he added another by marrying Miss Atherstone, a model for Cleopatra, possessed of a characteristically rich voice, and power of using it, that inspired her with the ambition of a musical career.

For two or three years we, that is my wife and I—for my wife took to her enthusiastically on account of her musical talent,—made a point of seeing Jones and his wife annually. Once we all went

to the opera, where we were joined by the younger Costa ; we were in his box, I believe. It was soon evident to me that Jones was incurably unhappy that evening, and possibly every evening.

I accidentally saw, too, for the last time that season, a writer of poetry worthy of mention, Thomas Wade, whose *Mundi et Cordis Carmina*, published some time before, had been succeeded from time to time by elaborate compositions which received no attention. He was now, like myself, only a visitor to London, having arrived from Jersey, where he had settled down as a newspaper editor. Jones's workmanship was too crude ; popular failure was certain in his case, and, I fear, the subtilising and ultra-refinement of Wade—the want of backbone possessing spinal marrow—was so also in his case. Had he continued to reside in London, and been possessed of a sufficiently impressive and conciliatory personality, this want would not have been against him ; but, as said before, he had left the centre of literary influence. After his first trial in an important volume, Wade used to issue his poems separately, without binding or even cover, though the successive issues were paged successively. I mean by his so issuing his poems he saved the expense of publishing ; he simply sent them to his friends, who knew the successive portions were meant ultimately to make a volume. R. H. Horne, in these unpoetical times, that is in 1843 and for a decade after that date, took a different plan. He published *Orion* at the price of one farthing, and

Millar, who kept a small second-hand book-shop, published it for him. I remember this very well, because, before leaving London for the north of England, I sold Millar a quantity of heavy books I could not carry with me, for which he paid me about a tithe of what they had cost me.

Meeting Horne thirty years after at my own home, by invitation to dinner, when he appeared bearing a flaming link nearly as long as himself, the evening being foggy, I found this nominal price had only brought him chaff—his poem having been christened “The Farthing Epic,” which still rankled in the author’s mind. I thought to pay him a compliment by alluding to these bad times when he had published at this price, but he wheeled about upon me savagely: “Why remember that? *Orion* has since gone through ten editions at a monstrous price!”

Some day this interval of time when no sane poetry could meet with attention, when Tennyson scarcely paid, and Browning became unintelligible, may be critically accounted for. The changes in public taste in this, the highest form of artistic creation, the popularity of poetry or the contrary, are very obscure in their causes. At the moment when some admirable poems fell stillborn, their authors were respected as much as at any other time; but their appreciators were not the critics, and all the journals were in the hands of jocular prosaists—men only to be aroused by something furiously sensational, like *Balder*, or of a semi-comic character.

At this period we were annually the guests of Dr. John Epps, the homœopath, in whose house I first met my wife. All the period since the two ladies, his wife and mine, had been schoolgirls together at Stratford at ye Bowe, not a week had passed without exchange of letters, an instance of feminine friendship pleasant to record. To describe him would be a useless task. He had been so spoilt in his youth by being the pet of the narrow Baptist circle to which my father belonged in Edinburgh, that he expected the same flattery in the world at large. Then he preached, as well as lectured, on anatomy and medicine, for his industry was prodigious, and harangued at political meetings more than either. He let his clocks be carried away for church rates, and took up with every new thing. In his house Mazzini was to be found, and Kossuth and Orsini too in later years—the handsomest of men, even of Italians, as far as my experience goes. Epps's politics, though they sorted queerly with his Sunday evening preaching, got him a large publicity : an invitation, for example, to stand for Northampton. I was in town at the time. He went to address the electors, but I declined his kind invitation to be his aide-de-camp, being ignorant of politics and unaccustomed to public speaking ! He had not much success, but his committee were highly pleased with him, franked him all through, and sent him home voiceless, from shouting on open hustings, with a vote of thanks. And as I am confessing my literary experiences, I must record my discovery of a new

Wordsworth in his butler Harrodine. One morning he offered me, in a confidential manner, along with my hat, as I left the house, a little bundle of MSS., some of which I found to be curiously naïve, and certainly studies from nature. They are interesting as showing how a simple experience expressed without affectation resembles some of Wordsworth's more familiar pictures, and becomes valuable, like a voice from Nature herself. I found that he, like his master, had his own particular Sunday evening shop where he occasionally held forth, and that he also wrote now and then in his own particular spiritual journal, which bore the lively name of *The Earthen Pot*. Here is one of his poems as a specimen.

THE TRAVELLING TIMBER MERCHANT

One November's cold, raw morning,
The clock about the eighth hour's warning,
Just as I laboured to divest
Some boots that yesterday got dressed
 In robes of mother earth,
That they might show a comelier sight,
And be from dingy changed to bright
By means, as you must understand,
Of liquid made at 30 Strand—
 A liquid of much worth,

I spied, on lifting up my head,
Through window blind a little shred,
A man I could not choose but mark,
He was so like a patriarch,
 Such solemn steps he took.

A grave and serious man was he,
A man of mark he seemed to me,
His countenance struck one with awe,
Like Justice Chief of criminal law,
Yet placid was his look.

His waistcoat, trousers, and surtout,
Were not exactly quite worn out ;
P'raps good as his whose hand by stealth
Gained kingly sway i' the Commonwealth,
The great Protectorship !
And now he touched this dress with care,
As dainty maidens touch their hair,
Pulled down his waistcoat at each side,
Set straight his hat that was too wide,
Then wiped his fasting lip.

Thus halting, as I said before,
Two paces from the kitchen door,
He raised his stick, advanced one step,
And gave the door a triple rep,
Then gently set it down.
And from a bag his left did hold
He took with care the wares he sold,
That so all ready he would be
When any inmate he might see,
Either in breech or gown.

Waiting thus in calm repose,
He wiped again his mouth and nose ;
But no one hastened to appear—
They either did not heed or hear ;
Anon, he rapt again.
The page now opened, I could see,
To whom he made a slight congee ;
This page, presuming from his look
He wanted something from the cook,
Though here he was mista'en,

Hastily turned again and said,
"A man at door is begging bread."
"I've none to give," she called out plain—
"Nought for thee," said the boy again,
 As she called out before.
But he, with independence grave,
Said, "Charity I do not crave,
But matches sell ; if you will buy,
I can your wants full well supply
 From this my travelling store."

Back then went the second tale,
"Matches has the man for sale" ;
"We want none," was the swift reply.
"None !" said the boy so short and dry,
 And it began to rain.
But with a bow, though somewhat quick,
He raised his bundle on his stick,
Turned his long back upon our door,
And I have never seen him more.
 He'll never come again.

CHAPTER XX

DEATH OF MY BROTHER DAVID—HIS CHARACTER—
FIRST INTERVIEW WITH CARLYLE—WOOLNER—
DEATH OF MY MOTHER, AND EXTINCTION OF MY
FAMILY.

THE time approached for the extinction of my home circle. It had been diminishing all through my life : now came its end. When David and my mother were left by themselves I used to run through to Edinburgh on the top of the mail passing Melrose, a long and frightfully cold journey ; now, about the end of February 1849, the railway carried me thither and back in a few hours. David was still utilising every hour, as if he knew that the end was at hand. "Work while it is yet day," Samuel Brown's chosen motto, was written high up on both their study walls, chemical and artistic, and leaning below his large pictures were annually accumulating. When I was a little boy, all we children, three brothers and a sister, had each been presented by a friend with a copy of Watts's *Hymns* ; the same book was given to each. In one of these hymns a couplet filled me with such awe that I never forgot it, and still thought of it with a kind of terror—

The numbered hour is on the wing
That lays thee with the dead.¹

I used to figure to myself this inevitable Hour, not on a moon-like car, like the Hour in Shelley's *Prometheus*, which has a dash of scenic splendour which neither would nor could rise to the mind of a child, but as a dark angel with great outspread wings, and drapery flashing behind its thighs, like some Miltonic illustration by Fuseli or Loutherbourn. I thought of him becoming larger as he came nearer. And this image came again into my mind as I rushed swiftly along the coast line of rail, then newly opened, and at that time a very dangerous one, to watch by my brother's bedside during his last days and nights. These days and nights were wild and windy. I sat by a fire at the foot of his bed, at first reading to him, but afterwards to myself, as he cared not to listen. Now and then I turned round to be sure that he was rightly covered, and never did so without meeting his eyes wide open, steadily fixed upon me. Only once he was asleep, when I made a little pencil sketch of him. Another night, when the storm was careering over the roof, I wrote a few verses—not very rhythmical, but expressing what was in my mind, so that I did not try to polish them up afterwards. It was only two nights before he died, at four o'clock in the morning.

¹ A mistake: the hymn in which these lines appear is not by Watts. It must have been read in one of my first school-books.





died 5th March 1842
 #42

Grand, Walt. Two Days before his Death.

Engraved by W. D. S.

3 March 1842



REQUIEM

The winds are wandering all through the night,
Rushing and moaning round chimney and roof;
The ashes fall dead from the dull firelight,
The great shadows move o'er the walls aloof,
While the soul of my brother recedes.

Fitfully crumble the embers away;
Abroad over all flies the roaring wind;
And the rain-clouds, through the obscurity,
Hurry across the moon silently kind,
Like an opened window in heaven.

The relentless Norns are seeing us now,
They open the gates of gold and of horn;
For the nimbus of death is over his brow,
And for ever hath left his hand outworn
Its power in the art divine.

Go back, go back! would the spirit fain say
To the inpressing darkness and walls of stone;
For the eyes of Hope are as wide as day,
And the task of life is but partly done,
And still young the manifold heart.

Come back, come back! doth the world demand,
For the sunshine to-day is a heaven indeed,
And the kindred labourers on the strand
Of this dear human region plead:
Go not, of thee we have wondrous need—
They hale him with strong right hands.

The black angel hears not—the ages dead
And the ages to come are one family,
All under the great Father's mantle hid;
The trophies of art and of poetry
Are but chaff from the garner of time.

The blast is wandering all through the night ;
Within the white curtains the straight limbs lie,
Faintly flickers out the last firelight ;
But hark ! the cock crows, for morning is nigh,
Sternly rending the cold, wet sky,
While the soul of my brother recedes.

The two men I have known whose influence over those about them has been most overpowering have been my brother David, who never used this influence for his advancement, and D. G. R., who has just begun to appear in these pages, and who is a master in the use of it, and I hope will continue to be so in a professional way, at all events. Probably no one spoke loudly or coarsely before Milton or Michael Angelo when their working years were past ; but here was a man, just over forty, from whom fortune had turned aside, but whose personality was so impressive, and whose moral and artistic powers and characteristics were so harmonious with, and so expressed by, the outward man, that every one acted towards him as if he were a saint whose halo had gathered before his martyrdom. If I were to describe his invention, drawing, and other artistic powers in the terms of praise they deserved, it might be reasonably asked, Why then did he fail ? I may answer the question without being interrogated. He had no power over female beauty in his art, and in every other feature he repudiated modern taste ; his natural genius, which made him more like Tintoretto than any two men within my knowledge have been like each other, impelled him to repudiate all the popular English treatments and subjects ; and his

faith in himself, though borne so meekly in private life, made him internally laugh at the means necessary for success. He would rather sacrifice its attainment than go out of his way—that is to say, modify his peculiarities so as to succeed. Faith in himself and in the old masters, and blindness to the modern position of art, killed him. He continued to paint the terrible and the tragic, he even wilfully indulged in peculiarities that he knew were fatal to his pictures, because he would not attend to advice. *Frangas non flectas* was his unacknowledged law. I, his brother, whose nature in many ways is exactly the opposite to all that, live on still—thirty years after he ceased to require the advice he never took—with something like my old ambition of self-culture, in which, alas, he, as an example to be avoided, painfully assisted.

I have said his critical weaknesses were confined to his art; but this requires explanation, since his papers on the old masters, heads of schools, published in *Blackwood*, were able and profound. What he was critically weak in, in relation to art, was in the professional question, the common sense and prudential conduct of his peculiar abilities, such as they were. He should have seen that to exercise them was to ruin himself. To paint or to think like an old Italian painter is to commit suicide; to paint or think like Tintoretto or Michael Angelo is certainly so. At a sale at Christie's I saw a small water-colour landscape by Turner bring £1000, a large Maclise £60, and an excellent small Fuseli £2!

I found many letters lying on his toilet-table, attesting the singular fascination his manners possessed. One began : "My dear Sir—You must forgive me if this note appears strange or out of place, for in plain I cannot help writing, as I cannot help loving and admiring you. I must try to communicate to you the deep gratification I experienced in your studio, and now, when you cannot yourself be there, my sympathy." Another said : "Within my heart is the image of the man to whom I now write, encircled by the cherubim of veneration and love. I often hold silent but charmed converse with you in that sacred chamber ; it is like a communion of spirit with spirit within a veil of light." A third said plainly : "Much-respected Sir—I declare on my sacred word of honour that I have passed the half of last night in tears thinking of you now so laid aside." A fourth sent a poem rather well done, but not calculated to raise the spirits either of the invalid or his friends. This was signed "J. W. E.," which initials I found to be those of J. Woodfall Ebsworth, with whom I have since then had much pleasant intercourse, and who has lately done poetical literature some service by editing the Bagford collection of Cavalier Ballads.

That dreadful day ! My dear old mother sat by his bedside, and at last closed his eyes. Then she said, "Now take me away ; let me go to bed, then come and sit with me." I remained by her bedside till far into the night. For a week past she had scarcely spoken a word, but now she lay, leaning her

pillowed head on her open hand, talking incessantly, recounting endless reminiscences of her early married life, of David's infancy, and of the other children. A reaction had ensued which I found difficult to understand, and which at the moment I dreaded. It seemed that the removal of suspense had swept away the present, and kept her wide awake. I longed to see in her the weariness that suggested sleep, which came at last.

Among my brother's papers I found many memoranda and tentative compositions, curious enough. He had a great desire to be what nature never meant him for—a man of society, or rather a man of the world. Here is a page from an early note-book, headed "Maxims from Italy":—

Never allow a servant to assist you unless you mean to pay him.

Never look a man in the face you wish to appear to disregard.

To look towards any one with whom you are not acquainted suggests a desire for his acquaintance.

Not to look a man in the face, however, may indicate consciousness regarding him.

An invitation to dinner from a person with whom you have little intimacy often shows he is not sure of your opinion of him, and wishes to make it good.

All explanation implies deference.

On joining a mixed company do not enter into conversation with any one without knowing his position in relation to the others present.

Never lean, lounge, or yawn before an inferior.

Warmth of feeling is often met by coldness, or even disgust, in conversation, because those you address have not taken up the matter seriously; surface intercourse only is safe.

Do not appear over much obliged in thanking any one with whom you are on equal terms.

Freedom of talk and badinage may be united with a defensive manner ; this is very desirable.

All this shows more sensitiveness and self-consciousness than wisdom, I fancy. But I know nothing of the ways of the frequenters of the Greco half a century ago. Travelling with *vetturini* so near our own time as 1832 must have been a dreary undertaking, if some of his unfinished attempts at story-telling are to be believed. These have a great appearance of being minute studies from nature, indeed so much so that they possess something of the precision of word-painting, which has come up since then in the works of Balzac, and now in those of a hundred others. When engaged on the *Memoir* which I published I found these too fragmentary to print. I commemorated this publication in a sonnet, which I may give here :—

My brother, latest of so many, passed
Across the unknown dark sea, where we all
Must follow, as our days and hours are cast.
I speak to thee, I touch the mournful pall
To lay thy own bay-leaves upon thy bier.
It may be in the arcane things of God
Thou still dost feel this touch, dost feel and hear,
And recognisest still the cold green sod,
Immensely far, yet infinitely near !
Thou who hast shown how much the stedfast soul
Bears abnegation, how an ideal goal
Robs life, how singleness of heart hopes long,
And how, by suffering sanctified, the song
From the inner shrine becomes more just and strong.

This *Memoir*, which was illustrated with some of his designs done in etching, was a depressing task to me. It made a profound impression of the same kind on many readers, which I hear of even now in the most unexpected ways ; but it brought out some clerical antagonism. A Dr. Hamilton in Edward Irving's Regent Square Church pointed him out to his congregation as an instance of the vanity of genius and cultivation ; the preacher said he scrawled on his studio-wall the word *Nepenthe* ? with a note of interrogation, which nepenthe he never found, of course, although it was within the reach of every humble-minded Christian who read the Bible. Gilfillan too, who edited the English poets very ably, and deserves so much credit for introducing Alexander Smith to the public, and who was indeed one of my brother's circle of friends, contrasted in a London weekly journal the death of David Scott with that of the amiable Delta (Dr. Moir of Musselburgh). This was done with some expressions of respect, but still he utilised the occasion by contrasting the suspended judgment of the rationalist with the peace of mind of the Presbyterian. An old gentleman wrote me from Manchester, begging I would communicate to him all I had to say about my brother's religion. I could have made him appear as a pious man ; perhaps I should have done so. I could have printed a prayer before meat in the shape of a litany which I found in his handwriting, but I still think I should have been wrong to so represent him.

Thou who preservest all things,
Bless what we are now to receive,
Thou who sustainest all life,
Bless what we are now to receive,

so this litany began. I might have sent it to my Manchester inquirer, with many other indications of a sense of our dependence on and relation to the Supreme. For instance this, "Long life, God's gift : a proof of our harmony with God." The word "God" is here put instead of the word "Nature," which would have expressed his meaning clearer but with a limitation : the frame of mind that determined his choice of the nobler of the two words indicating the difference between the pietistic and the rationalistic. Another letter arrived shortly after of a different kind. Besides the *Memoir* I published several sets of designs—one set in a new edition of Professor Nichol's *Architecture of the Heavens*, his last and one of his most imaginative series of sketches ; and a set of illustrations to the *Pilgrim's Progress*. This last was published in successive numbers, and the agent or canvasser of the publisher, resorting to all schemes to ensure subscribers, had got access to Carlyle and impressed him with the idea that the publication was for the private benefit of the artist's mother. Carlyle subscribed, but having some misgiving, wrote me at once, saying if this was the truth, "then undoubtedly some effort should be made by such as recognise your brother's genius." Although, as I explained at once, the assertion was a base device of the

canvasser, this generous, prompt, and friendly act bound me to Carlyle for ever. Being in London a few weeks afterwards, I had the culprit brought before me. The publisher had placed him at my mercy, but I could not punish a man in such a dependent position as had driven him to such a device.

Carlyle had told Woolner, with whom I had just become acquainted as one of the P.R.B., of this, and he and I went out to Cheyne Row to spend an evening by invitation; I think this was my first meeting with him. So peculiar a Scotchman in voice and manner I was not prepared to meet. Natives of the same province recognise at once the clay from which each other must have originally sprung; no amount of schooling can change him or hide the peasant origin from being seen by another of the same locality, although the acutest Londoner does not seem to detect it. But here, face, dress, manners, and accent were all alike those of a man rather proud of his humble and provincial antecedents, one not at all ambitious of being a citizen of the world. His conversation was exactly like his Latter-day Pamphlets, only more damnatory, and his descriptions of people and things—he did not care so much for talking of books—were admirably terse, vivid, and vigorous, but all from one point of view—anatomical; his voice, emphatic enough, was like the rattling of pebbles and boulders driven against each other in a spate. “Ah!” said he, “you’re an artist,” pronouncing the first syllable of the word like *air*, which I had not heard even in Edinburgh

for a long time back. "But you're something more. Ah, well, I can make nothing of artists, nor of their work either." Let the reader remember he had just been sitting to Woolner for his medallion. "Empty as other folk's kettles are, artists' kettles are emptier, and good for nothing but tying to the tails of mad dogs. So little do I care to venture on these speculations, I have never been at an exhibition all the many years I have lived in London." This was disappointing to one who held by the self-culture doctrine of the hero of Weimar, Carlyle's hero too! The least self-asserting of all the sons of Adam, I did not like it, and required to recall my obligation to him for his friendliness about the bookseller's agent to make me bear this boasting combined with ignorance. But he was morally exactly what I hoped for, intolerant and denunciatory only because truth and justice, or the want of these, were ever present to his mind; his speech obeyed the strictest veracity, and carried with it, on the whole, generous, manful kindness. Still I felt that it was necessary to know him very well or not at all. The furnishing of his good old home was not very exhilarating: his book-shelves were largely filled with the *Annual Register*, and nothing but common ugly portraits were on the walls, particularly a poor engraving of the smug face of Francis Jeffrey, not very profound reviewer and Lord of Session.

Woolner had already imbibed or soon after did imbibe, quite a devotion to Carlyle and a sort of worship of Mrs. Carlyle. She was actually that

evening in a rather low dress, a fashion much decried, gone out indeed, and to any one with thin arms and no "bust" to speak of, a monstrous mistake and self-deception. But she was evidently a kindly entertainer, and desirous of the reputation of a *raconteuse*, so she told us the story of "the cock that crew in the morn," which appeared to me to show symptoms of considerable dressing-up, "cooking" as Sir Henry Cole used to say. Woolner was, moreover, in a rebellious mood, believing the country was going to the dogs, and all the arts in particular; but of all the arts the one, in his opinion, in the worst plight was sculpture. He had only had one small commission in a long series of years of professional application. Meantime he had been writing poetry. "But poetry is not my proper work in this world," he said as we returned to town; "I must sculpture it, not write it. If a man undertakes to plough a field, but shies off with a gun in his hand and brings back any amount of game, would his master thank him? That's my case, and unless I take care, my master Conscience will have something to say that I shan't like. I have noticed his eye glaring at me already."

To return from this digression to Edinburgh and to Easter Dalry house and studio, back to my dear mother, now solitary. I prevailed on her to select certain furnishings, large and small, to which she was attached, and to choose a place for herself, wherever she fancied. Her choice was Portobello, where she used to take all us children for sea-bathing in the

summers of long past years, and the very house where we then used to lodge if it could be got. In all things, Voltaire says, we begin with the simple, and advance to the concrete and compound, till by superior light we attain to the simple again. In actual life, after roaming the world over, how many of us are fain to return to our native sod. That particular cottage was not to be got, but in another similar, built for summer visitors, only a little way from the shingle and within sound of the tide, with an old family servant who remembered us in the former days, I saw her comfortably, as far as might be, settled. On approaching the iron gate enclosing the little front garden, I used to see her, could always see her, seated in the same place by the parlour window, the sill of which was strewn with crumbs for the small birds that chirruped about and built in the ivy dwarfed by the salt breeze but still climbing against the wall. She does not easily hear my steps, but when I appear, her spectacles are quickly thrown off, and her eyes moisten with pleasure, for still a healthy tendency to tears remains (a weakness inherited by me). I am the one left out of many, and the waters of life are not dried up by which the heart is kept green. In this apartment, summer and winter, a smouldering economical fire gleamed, and by her easy-chair a little table stood carrying the workbox and other matters, now more from habit than for use, and in her lap lay the big-print Testament. She was close to fourscore. I had hung up some of my father's landscape

engravings in their old-fashioned frames, and had gas introduced as a light giving little trouble, but she had both quietly taken down again ; gas she had never used, and thought her house would be like a tavern with gas lighting it.

It is now the midsummer of another year, 1852. For two days I sat beside her, reading aloud very audibly her favourite chapters from the New Testament ; on the third I saw that the shadow of an unknown evening made all things indistinct to her at noonday, and utterly indifferent. A warm afternoon it was, with all the doors open and the sound of the tidal waves breaking and receding again distinctly audible in the stillness, when the dear face was quieted for ever. As I stooped over to kiss it for the last time, a loud knock of three strokes came to a side door that led into the yard behind. The old servant hobbled out to answer, but no one was there nor could any one be traced. At the moment this trivial incident received no attention, but afterwards it recurred to me as one of those circumstances that, rightly or wrongly, encourage us in supernaturalism.

To the survivor of his race, a great field of sympathy is lost. The past and the to-come are more to him, the present less.

Go preach then to him of a world to come,
Where friends shall meet and know each other's face ;
Say less than this and say it to the winds.

In a mysterious trunk she always kept in her bedroom, and which I opened some time after, not

without some pious hesitation, the loving maternal nature had preserved relics of each one of all her children; relics added successively as their beloved possessors had been gathered in by death. Here was a humming-top, labelled thus:—"This was the last plaything held by dear little Walter's dear little hand." It must have lain in this box, as I now found it, for about fifty years, and here were along with it, small shoes and caps, gloves, picture-books, and locks of hair. The silver bells and coral we had all used, and which had descended as a nursery tradition, I found among the rest. The last deposit made but lately was David's miniature dressing-case he had carried to Italy and home again.

I should like to insert here two sonnets on this most affectionate and dear mother. One on the remembrance of an early period of life before my sister died, the other written with many tears, an attempt to record her death.

MY MOTHER

ST. LEONARDS. EDINBURGH, 1826

A pebbled pathway led up to the door
Where I was born, with holly hedge confined,
Whose leaves the winter snows oft interlined,
Oft, now it seems, because the year before
My sister died we were together more,
And from the parlour window every morn
Snow lay there, while our mother's face, so worn
With fear of coming ill, bent sweetly o'er.

And when she saw me watching, smile would she
And turn away with many things distraught :
Thus was it manhood took me by surprise,
The sadness of her heart came into me,
And everything I ever yet have thought
I learned then from her anxious loving eyes.

MY MOTHER

PORTOBELLO, NEAR EDINBURGH, 1852

There was a gathered stillness in the room
Only the breathing of the great sea rose
From far off, aiding that profound repose,
With regular pulse and pause within the gloom
Of twilight, as if some impending doom
Was now approaching ; I sat moveless there,
Watching with tears and thoughts that were like prayer,
Till the hour struck, the thread dropped from the loom,—
And the Bark passed, in which freed souls are borne.
The dear stilled face lay there : that sound forlorn
Continued : I rose not, but long sat by :
And now my heart oft hears that sad sea-shore,
When she is in the far-off land, and I
Wait the dark sail returning yet once more.

I left the cottage that evening and only re-entered it on the day of the funeral. I walked about the streets of Edinburgh, where I had now no home, visiting well-remembered localities now changed. The High School, now transformed into an additional set of wards to the Infirmary ; the house in which I was born, still existing, but only as a coal office in a railway station ; feeling myself at forty to be an aged man. Then the feeling changed : I was dead and re-born into a more self-centred and freer existence. I determined on several things : never

to enter the old city again ; also to write out what I had experienced, and to be done with the somnambulism in which I had been liable to indulge. I actually did write out such a narrative. I did not find that

The middle year of mortal life
That overtakes us by surprise
In the midst of darkling strife
Lifts the veil from off our eyes,

and yet I found I had somehow, and in an obscure way, come to believe that we have some foreknowledge or instinct of what is to come.

The manuscript I then made was that mentioned at the beginning of these notes. I have preserved and hitherto sometimes used this MS. : now it shall go into the fire. In a few more years, if God allows me so many, this new narrative may share the same fate. And why ? Because the motives that cease to move us we repudiate, and dislike seeing ourselves described under their influence. It is only the skin of the living creature the autobiograph writer deals with : we change our skin as some other creatures do, and do not wish to preserve that suit we abandon. He, the autobiographer, chooses also to deal with his subject as a painter chooses to deal with his model ; the innermost nature that survives all changes he fears to touch or he has no words to suit. His manuscript is

Words, words, mere words, 'tis nothing from the heart,
(*Tearing the paper,*)
Go wind to wind, there turn and change together.

CHAPTER XXI

THE FEW TRULY PRE-RAPHAELITE PICTURES OF THE
THREE P.R.B.'S—WALTER DEVERELL AND CHARLES
COLLINS.

THE very first year of my acquaintance with the poet D. G. R. and the set of young innovating artists to which he belonged, I had a visit from his brother William. In the summer of 1848 he appeared in Newcastle, and it was only by seeing the mysterious letters P.R.B. on the address of his letters that I became aware of the existence of the bond of union which rose to be so celebrated in a year or two, much to their own surprise. "It's only a sort of club some of Gabriel's and Hunt's friends and other young fellows have planned out, and I, the youngest of the set, but no artist, am to be secretary. It is only friendly, we are making a start on a new line," he continued. I thought no more about it till he was leaving, when he suggested that the brotherhood was going to print something I might hear of. He wanted to keep it to himself at that moment, so I said no more; but I found afterwards that the combination was extremely

limited and heterogeneous, and it was only the name of Millais, the favourite of the Academy and miracle of precocity, and the singularity of their cognomen, that gave them immediate notoriety.

One year, or perhaps two, after my first visit to Hunt and Rossetti, I was in Millais' studio, when I observed a print hanging there framed. It was an Italian engraving, inscribed "From Nature," by Agostino Lauro at Turin, dated 1845, and called "Meditacione," representing a girl seated among shrubs and trees. Every leaf of every plant, nay, the two halves of every leaf, radiating from the centre fibre even of those in shade, were elaborated, and the pattern on the dress of the girl was in every part exactly made out. I was arrested by this print when Millais quitted his easel and approached. "Ha! you've observed that, have you; that's P.R.B. enough, is it not? We haven't come up to that yet. But," he went on, "I for one won't try: it's all nonsense; of course nature's nature, and art's art, isn't it? One could not live doing that!" So soon had the principal executive tenet of the bond fallen off from the ablest expert of the three painters who were giving the new school its renown.

With respect to the title Pre-Raphaelite. Previous to the period of Raphael and the approach to naturalism, the only *raison d'être* of painting in Italy may be said to have been its service to the Church. D. G. R.'s two early pictures might really, both in invention and execu-

tion, be termed P.R., though they infallibly contained a modern sentiment. But as to Millais, minute detail only for a moment pleased him, and he could do perfectly whatever he took in hand; but when he took up a Christian subject, and painted "The Carpenter's Shop," there was nothing Giottesque about it. In it symbolism and naturalism prevailed, a wonderful combination that astonished every one.

This picture was to me like a revelation. It delighted me more than any other new picture I have ever seen. At first I thought I should find it was the result intellectually of all the three leaders of the band; but it was not so. I could not find that either Rossetti or Hunt had aided him at all. Great things from small beginnings necessarily rise. At that time a sort of artisans' drawing-class, in opposition to the Board of Trade Schools of Design, was begun in Camden Town; all these young men were more or less interested in it, but it was really a desperate venture by the unsuccessful F. M. Brown, who was the teacher. When I visited it, which I did with great curiosity, having gone in myself for the Government system, I found Christina Rossetti among the pupils, who were all drawing not from casts or beautiful objects of any kind, either from sculpture or ornament, nor even from symmetrical forms, or solids to illustrate perspective—from nothing in short but wood-shavings picked up from a joiner's yard. This was outdone afterwards, as we shall see, by

Ruskin at the Working Man's College; I mention it here, however, in reference to Millais' "Carpenter's Shop." The shavings in that picture immediately suggested to me that Brown's Artisan's Drawing-School models had been resorted to by the genius while executing his great creation. I came to this conclusion without, in the least, derogating from Millais' originality or honour, but simply from having previously observed that the shavings were lying on the carpenter's floor in the picture, one or two here and there like individual studies, not in masses and heaps as he would have found they did in any real joiner's workshop.

A little later Holman Hunt's "Light of the World," greater in thought, and at the same time abler in execution, completed the trilogy of truly Pre-Raphaelite pictures. Of these three Rossetti's attracted least attention; it had neither symbolism nor moral, nor any relation to English art, yet its lovely Christian purity of feeling, one might have expected, should have drawn attention. His second "Art-Catholic" picture was similar in this supreme purity of feeling, but had no other quality to recommend it. He disappeared from the exhibiting world altogether, and the two other leaders of the new school turned to other themes. In truth the brotherhood was a heterogeneous body, the only other able artist in the small group being Woolner the sculptor, and he was altogether averse to such sentiment. I had been impressed by the grandeur of the monumental statues in stone in the porches

of Chartres Cathedral, and advised him to study them, but found he utterly repudiated mediæval influences. There was, indeed, still another painter in the P.R.B. group of seven, and he was too seriously moved by the momentary religious tone then in vogue. This was Collinson, who painted Saint Elizabeth of Hungary from Kingsley's *Saint's Tragedy*. In this picture the young queen and saint was praying in church surrounded by many figures, but the drawing as well as the sentiment was too flaccid and weak, and the realisation of the subject, neat indeed and smooth, but feeble in the extreme. In all respects the picture resembled the *feckless* dilettanteism of the converts who were then dropping out of their places in Oxford and Cambridge into Mariolatry and Jesuitism. In fact, this James Collinson actually did become Romanist, wanted to be a priest, painted no more, but entered a seminary, where they set him to clean the boots as an apprenticeship in humility and obedience. They did not want him as a priest; they were already getting tired of that species of convert; so he left, turned to painting again, and disappeared.

This truly "Pre-Raphaelite" performance was, however, a warning, especially to Gabriel Rossetti; but it was his difficulty in acquiring a technique satisfactory to himself, or in creating a manner of painting in oil, that stopped his further progress for so many years. These two early pictures by D. G. R. were small, and they were executed

thinly like water-colour works, or stippled like miniatures, with the point of the brush. He found "one could not live doing that," as Millais said of his own practice at that time, although practically two men, one of them certainly a man of genius, have done so through life, Holman Hunt and Brett. What then? He floundered about, and for many years worked only on a small size in water-colours, until by adopting life-size he suddenly found himself emancipated; the scale of life, the large brush, and full palette, cut him off from the influence of his former habits, and for the last ten years, as I now write, he has been really a painter.

To return to 1850, the communications about the promised monthly publications of the brotherhood soon arrived; in letter after letter describing the preparations and wanting contributions; but I took little notice of them, though very curious to see what the publication would resemble. Woolner's *My Beautiful Lady* in its first form began the first number, with an etching by Hunt, and D. G. R.'s prose story, *Hand and Soul*. Here is a note from the last-mentioned, treating of the publication, which is now a great literary curiosity, and other matters. It is dated from 72 Newman Street, 2nd May 1850, and begins ceremoniously regretting having been so long in writing, leaving me, perhaps, in the belief "that our magazine is among the defunct." "I send you," he goes on to say, "herewith the two new numbers as a living proof to the contrary." I saw, however, that the

thing had changed its title, and was published on the last day of the month, and dated for the month gone by. These alterations were owing to the wish of a gentleman who had undertaken the whole expense of the publication, without which timely succour it must have been dropped.

"Can you manage to send us anything, either poetry or prose? I assure you it would be of the most essential value, especially an illustratable paper." He adds that they are all beginning again to work at their paintings in the purpose of astounding Europe next year, and have consequently but little time to write.

I had sent him a circular from the Newcastle Exhibition, but he had nothing to send, "having been guilty as yet of only two small pictures, one of which he had the luck to sell last year;" while the second was at the moment exhibiting, still unsold. "It has been a great deal abused," he adds. "The *Athenæum* for one paper, which was polite last year, is now dreadfully impertinent. The *Times*, on the other hand, favourable enough, which is a tower of some strength. I am beginning, for me, a vast work, with nearly thirty figures in it."

The remainder of his letter is taken up with my *Memoir* of my brother. My part in it is, he thinks, excellently done; and my brother's part sustained with a power and energy which none will question. The "Vasco da Gama" must be a grand work—one of the few pictures he had heard of which he would care much to see. He cannot say that the

"Discord" appears to him nearly equal. In this he is surely wrong. Some of my brother's works had been known to him for a considerable time; "the first things of his I saw being his cartoons at Westminster Hall in 1843, which I admired for their vigour and independence—and at that time, I believe, for their eccentricities also." Since then he had seen his plates for the *Ancient Mariner*, "many of which were in the truest Coleridgean vein"; his fine "Monograms"; his "Sleeping Peasant and Fairies," "a wonderful little picture," and a few other things. "I was so greatly interested in him and his works, that at one time I used to copy from the *Art Union*, or any other paper, wherever notices appeared of any productions of his; which copies I still have." He told me he wanted to review the *Memoir* himself, for the *Germ*, and requested his brother William, therefore, not to do so; but after all he did not find time. So no review of the *Memoir* appeared there.

In the conclusion of the letter, after again saying that they hope for something from me, he speaks of himself writing a story for No. 5, to be illustrated by Millais. A "longish poem," which he had been writing, had to be given up, "being deemed immoral (!) by our proprietor." Who this proprietor was I never knew, but the fact was that no further number ever appeared.¹

¹ [Mr. W. M. Rossetti informs me that the Proprietor was George Tupper, the eldest son in the printing firm of Tupper and Sons. This firm printed all four numbers of the *Germ*, and financed Nos. 3 and 4—or Geo. Tupper financed them.—ED.]

In this, "our Magazine," as he calls it, the *Germ*, appeared both in etching and poetry Walter Deverell, a son of the Somerset House Secretary of our Government Schools of Design, a youth, like the rest of them, of great but impatient ability, and of so lovely yet manly a character of face, with its finely-formed nose, dark eyes and eyebrows, and young silky moustache, that it was said ladies had gone hurriedly round by side streets to catch another sight of him. I found D. G. R. and him in the same studio in Red Lion Square, on going to town in the autumn. He was painting the Forest of Ardennes from the dusty foliage of that dingy precinct, and the studio seemed the haunt of all the set, a different set certainly from that I have before described, in which Frith and O'Neil were presiding spirits! Another man now appearing was Charles Collins, whose P.R.B.ism was certainly a little astounding. Millais took him kindly in hand, but he, like Deverell, gave in; what made the fortune of those first in the field, was ruin to their successors. Yet both of these youths had cultivation and insight and much talent. They might have been leaders in our English school in its normal state. They were in every respect superior to the old set, whose library consisted of *Gil Blas*, *Don Quixote*, and the *Vicar of Wakefield*. But they were fascinated by the three men who had struck out in rebellion, turning Frank Stone and the *Books of Beauty* into ridicule, and so had become imitators of their peculiarities rather than students of nature.

Deverell's best picture, painted in Red Lion Square, was the garden scene in *Twelfth Night*, where the Duke asks the Jester to "sing again that antique song he sang last night." Viola is looking wistfully at the Duke, whom Deverell painted from himself; and Viola was from Miss Siddal, with whom Gabriel, in his innocent adolescence, fell in love, and married after a long attachment: a marriage that came to an early and unfortunately dreadful end. Gabriel himself sat for the Jester, so that the picture has a profound interest to one who knew it in its progress. Two out of the three are already gone, and the third has been so ill, and is still so sometimes—ill, alas! in various ways,—that we fear he may not be with us long.¹ Some years ago, a good many indeed, I was surprised by seeing this *Twelfth Night* picture, with its various characters, real and imaginary, among the miscellaneous stock of a dealer who periodically visited Newcastle, and could not resist the impulse to possess it, which I still do.

Charles Collins's best picture was called "Meditation," a nun beside a fish-pond in the convent garden. This was very good, as there was not much room for bizarrerie; but his next picture, "A Jew pedlar offering for sale to Berengaria Richard's baldric," was extra realistic, and was hailed with mirth by the critics. The execution was hard as mosaic, the action of the figures extreme and comically stiff, the whole quaint beyond measure.

¹ [This was written in 1877.—ED.]

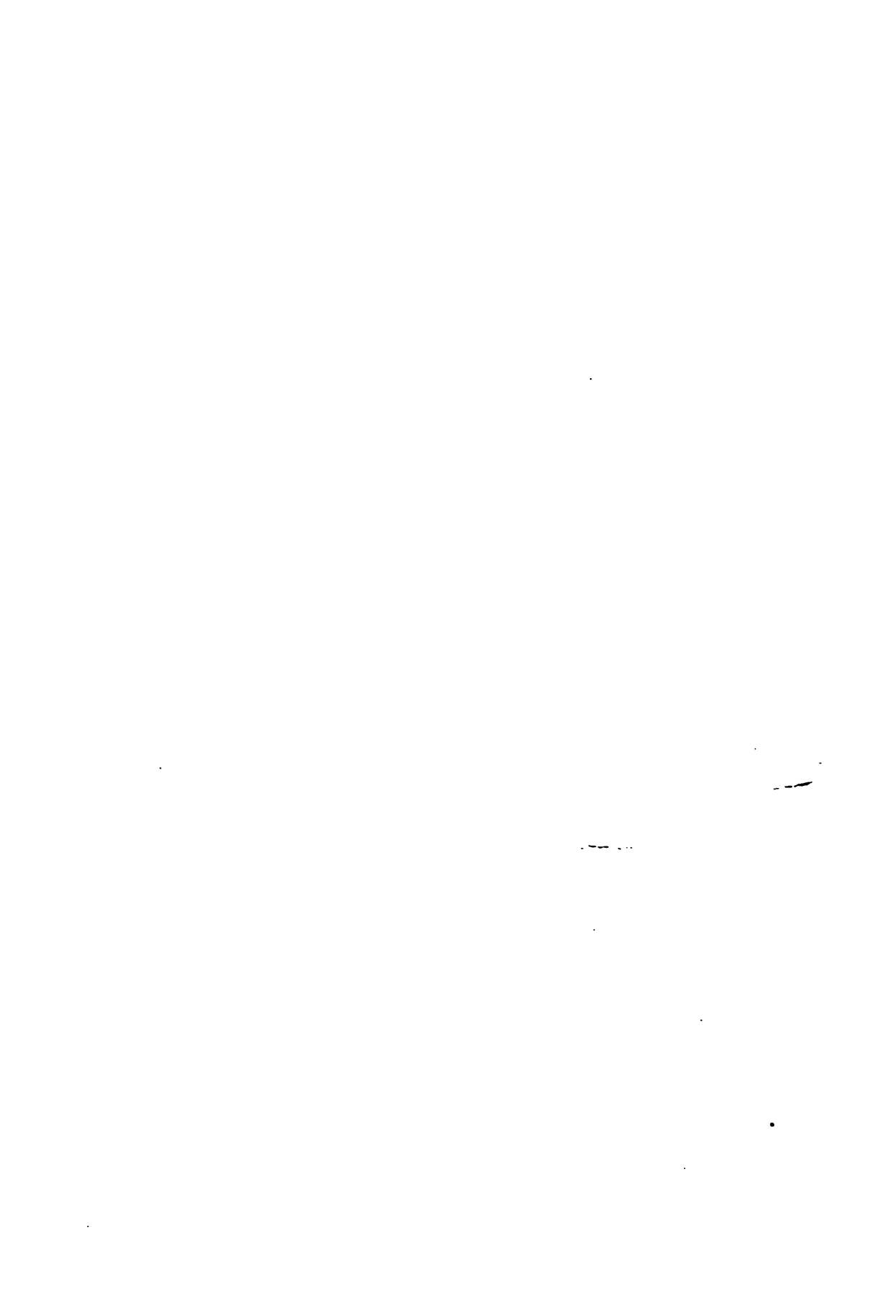
A few years ago I saw this in a sale at Christie's ; it sold for next to nothing. I ought to have bought it : not on that account, but to save a work with so much dramatic power and interest, on account of its painter, from the hands of the Philistines. The bad reception of these pictures and the gradual relaxation of the self-denying naturalism and laborious detailed manner of the originators of the new school, show how foreign to English taste the P.R.B. movement actually was.

D. G. Rossetti made a visit of some weeks to me at Newcastle in 1853, when I was preparing my little volume, sometimes called *Poems by a Painter*, from a frontispiece so inscribed. He brought with him some of his own poetry in manuscript, sonnets and other works, so we had much talk of poetry in the first place and of friends in the second, which last subject in his mouth was amusing enough. During my first visit to the small studio he shared with Holman Hunt, F. M. Brown came in, to whom I found Rossetti had been indebted for some lessons generously afforded. This he acknowledged with much effusion, but at the same time his account of the whole transaction made us merry more than once. Brown had been educated in Brussels, and so could paint thoroughly well in a certain manner, but he had received no sort of notice or success since his return to this country, and his temper was naturally a little volcanic. He had sent some designs and a painting to Westminster Hall which attracted Rossetti, but nobody else, so when Grand-

father Polidori offered to afford him some teaching in the technique of the art, D. G. R. wrote to Madox Brown asking him if he would condescend to take him as a pupil. "A few days after," said he, "I was told a gentleman wanted to see me. The gentleman would not come in, nor give his name; he would stand in the passage; and when I ran downstairs there stood Brown, a great stick in one hand and my note in the other! His salutation was, 'Is your name Rossetti, and is this your writing?' I said it was, but I began to shake in my shoes. 'What do you mean by it?' was his next question; and when I replied that I meant what I had written, wanting to be a painter, and knowing nothing of how to go about it, the fact dawned upon the Brownian intellect that the letter was not a hoax, but an honest compliment; he suddenly changed from a deadly antagonist to the sweetest of friends." Rossetti continued, "Brown is the dearest and kindest of old fellows, he would take no pay; had been educated at Brussels, and had a system of education which he would gladly apply to me. He set me to fag at some still life—drawing and painting both; but I could not stand that kind of thing, and after a time or two gave it up, began the picture beside Hunt, and there you saw me."

The great work with thirty figures he had mentioned in a letter was from Browning's *Bells and Pomegranates*, the "Song of the Page," which I found afterwards he had been struggling with for these two years past. Struggled with it just

4





Portrait of John F. Kennedy, 1860

1860

because he "would not stand" the preliminary work of education, and at last had apparently given it up. But there was another much less ambitious picture he had also in hand. My poem or recitative story with songs, first published in Hunt's *Repository* under the title of "Rosabell," was one of our subjects of talk. In it I had described the rustic lover Andrew, after having seen the lost girl in the town on market-day, waiting outside her parents' cottage-door hesitating to knock, not knowing how to break his evil news. Why not give the old lovers' actual meeting? he asked me; and when I declined trying such a scene, he said he would paint it. But the truth was he had already begun such a picture, and had spent a whole season painting a calf in a cart, which Andrew was driving to market, then laid it aside, as he had done the larger composition. When he knew I was about to republish the poem, he brought the subject forward in this way, but to me it was only a compliment; he advised me to give up the fine name of *Rosabell* and substitute *Mary Anne*, and offered to contribute an etching to my book. This he forthwith designed, but never accomplished the etching.

During these weeks I began to feel some sort of fascination about the personality of D. G. R., that makes one accept certain peculiarities in him. I found all his intimate associates did so, placing him in a position different from themselves, a dangerous position to the man whose temperament takes advantage of it. He was at this age just getting

out of boyhood, and in transition ; in the course of my experience of him he has changed his entire moral nature and views of life ; but this fascination giving him a sort of supremacy, he has never changed. With regard to his poetry, the spirit that had made him choose "Songs of the Art-Catholic" as a general title died out. The only sign of it among the MSS. he had brought with him was to be found in two sonnets called *The Church Porches*, Nos. I. and II. The first, on *entering Church*, was addressed to his sister Maria ; the second, on *leaving Church*, to Christina.

The first he has lately (1881) printed in his new volume, the other may be transcribed here.¹

THE CHURCH PORCH, II. (TO C. G. R.)

Sister, arise, we have no more to sing
Or say : the priest abideth as is meet,
To minister. Rise up out of thy seat,
Though peradventure 'tis an irksome thing
To cross again the threshold of our king,
Where his doors stand against the evil street
And let each step increase upon our feet
The dust we shook from them at entering.
Must we of very sooth go hence? The air,
Whose heat outside makes mist that can be seen,

¹ I transcribed these sonnets with his permission, that I might send them to the Durham University Magazine, a student speculation which existed for a very short period, and had ceased to be at this very time, so that these sonnets never saw the light through its means. They were what he considered juvenile things at that day, 1853, and I confess to being much surprised to see one of them printed among his latest efforts in 1881. The two sonnets taken in connection, and as characteristic of his early time, 1848, as they were written, are very interesting.

Is very clear and cool where we have been ;
 The priest abideth ministering, lo,
 As he for service, why not we for prayer ?
 It is so bidden, sister, let us go.

Another feature in my visitor astonished me more than I can now describe. He had never thought of pietistic matters except as a sentiment, theology being altogether ignored by him. This was a state of mind entirely new to me, a Scotchman, whose boyhood had been passed with the Shorter Catechism and the New Testament in my hand. He had no idea of the changed position of the historical forms or cosmogony of religion by geological and other discoveries ; and, indeed, was himself not sure that the earth really moved round the sun ! “Our senses did not tell us so, at any rate, and what then did it matter whether it did move or not ?” What Dante knew was enough for him. He then remembered Galileo, another Italian, and gave in ! It might matter in a scientific way, oh yes !¹

This visit to Newcastle was partly a holiday for his health. When he left, still complaining, I took him to Hexham, that charming, old-fashioned, ancient place, and continued with him on to Carlisle and Wetheral, where we parted. He was bent on walking. My first intelligence of him came from the Red Horse Inn at Stratford, and enclosed a

¹ I find Holman Hunt in the *Contemporary*, May 1886, has said almost exactly the same as the above of D. G. R., but I leave it as it was written years ago. I may say the same of some remarks I have made regarding Hunt's own career on a later page.

sonnet written on the road, "On Plucking a Honey-suckle," one of his distinctest and best, since printed. The note ended also with a picture of what he expects to find on returning to London. He had just moved into chambers in Chatham Place, and he fears to meet his former landlord with a certain amount of hair on end, which he illustrates in a funny but very amateurish fashion.



Then again, after his arrival in his new quarters in town, two letters appeared, one of them containing an elaborate criticism on my short poem "Saint Margaret," which I shall deny myself the pleasure of quoting. He says he quite woke to a sense of Shakespearian awe and homage when he got within hail of his ghost at Stratford. Then follows the sonnet (which has been printed) on the parson who cut down the mulberry tree. He had spent a very

pleasant day in an excursion to Hendon with Brown, who is the only man he had seen yet since his return. "Nevertheless," he says, "one feels again within the accursed circle; the skulls and bones rattle, the goblins keep mumbling, and the owls beat their obscene wings round the casting of those bullets, among which is the Devil's Seventh, though it should be hidden till the last. Meanwhile, to step out of the ring is death and damnation. Now I observe this metaphor is very fine. Something might be done with it—in charcoal. . . . I hope to get the etching done by the time I see you again at Hexham, and then to profit by your experience in carrying it out."

Our meeting again at Hexham was a proposal of his to paint there the background of his small picture of the rustic lover finding his former mistress. In another note he says he has the design for my poem done, "but has not yet stolen the copper to etch it on." I gave the matter up, publishing without his aid. As to his coming to Hexham he says, "I think, after all, I shall paint that town picture I told you of in London streets." This picture reappeared from time to time under the title "Found"; the design for my poem, representing the abandoned girl seeing a group of street children dancing, he painted in water-colours and called "The Gate of Memory."

One of the subjects of our evening talks had been *self-culture*. The egotistic side of this popular English Goetheism of the day was the only one he could see. I understood it differently: we disagreed;

and I found him revert to this in a letter which I shall quote as showing his state of mind at this time. He introduced his remarks by a criticism of Alexander Smith's *Life Drama*, then just published—

I have seen something of A. S.'s book. It is wonderful, exactly in the way you said, and I mean to read it through. The *Life Drama* has nothing particular to say except that it seems to bear vaguely towards the favourite doctrine that scoundrelism is a sacred probation of the soul. But I find this everywhere. I am reading *Wilhelm Meister*, where the hero's self-culture is a great process, amusing and amazing one. On one page he is in despair about some girl he has been the death of; in the next you are delighted with his enlarged views of Hamlet. Nothing, plainly, is so fatal to the duty of self-culture as self-sacrifice, even to the measure of a grain of mustard seed. The only other book I have read for more than a year is St. Augustine's *Confessions*, and here you have it again. As soon as the saint is struck by the fact that he has been wallowing, and inducing others to wallow, it is all horrible together, but involves no duty, except the comfortable self-appeasement of getting out of it himself. As for the women, no doubt they are nascent for hell. If I was not very sick of reading, which bores me excessively, I should like to hunt up as many instances of this noble theory as possible, and form them into an encyclopædia for the benefit of self-cultivators.

Excellent doctrine: self-sacrifice is the noblest of all. "He who would be greatest among you let him be the servant of all." Yet self-culture is the apprenticeship, self-sacrifice the mastership. Has it been so with D. G. R. or with myself?

CHAPTER XXII

TENNYSON AND HIS BROTHER—WOOLNER'S VISIT TO THE GOLD-DIGGINGS—MILLAIS

I MUST go back a year or two with my reminiscences of the new circle in London ; but as D. G. R., a leader among them, was so liberal a correspondent, I shall have to aid myself by his letters as far as I have preserved them. These are so interesting in themselves that this will be a double advantage.

In the summer of 1852, when the new movement was making so much noise in the world, and all the leaders were becoming celebrated, it was a painful surprise to find, as I—being within the pale and knowing the truth—did find, that no solid advantage had come to any one except to Millais, who would have been just as successful without all the talk. Even Holman Hunt had serious thoughts of going to Oxford to work hard for a fellowship, and of resigning his profession altogether. Woolner was planning his expedition to the gold-fields of Australia. F. Madox Brown envied me or any one by any means independent of

exhibitions—those annual humiliations to all unpopular painters, but most so to those outside academies and hanging committees. His attempt to organise a public drawing-class was found to be only self-sacrifice, without any real result. The time had not yet come, and the machinery for such an undertaking was entirely beyond his command. Unaided, he tried to do what the Government could not at first accomplish with the help of a dozen men like myself! Rossetti was discouraged even to despondency by the difficulties in his way on his picture of thirty figures.

Oxford or farming, by the invitation of an uncle who could give him an opening in that way, was Hunt's alternative, but gradually abandoned for a wiser scheme—that of going to the East. This, however, could not yet take place. Woolner was for the gold-diggings. He had modelled both Tennyson and Carlyle for love, but no commissions followed; so I found him preparing his "cradle" and his "kit," and buying revolvers—determined to force the treasure from mother earth, and to keep it from brigands. The weekly tidings of exhaustless wealth lifted at once out of the soil startled every one. The newspapers were filled with advertisements of outfittings and vessels sailing, partly because, independently of the attractions of the gold-fields, there was an emigration fever that year. In going to London¹ I found the train lengthened by many waggons filled with working men bound for the other side of the

¹ [In May 1852.—ED.]

world. "That's the sort of house I shall have *out yonder*," I heard one strong-handed mechanic saying to another on the swarming platform, as he looked up at the new station-house with its barge-boards and bayed windows. From London, as from Newcastle, people of every condition and age were embarking; but the metropolis sent out litterateurs and artists, instead of engineers, mechanics, or farmers; R. H. Horne, for example, Orion having done him no good, nor his protest against the "False Medium"; also William Howitt, who was organising a party. Woolner, being in his confidence, was, I think, to go in the same ship.

One evening at Patmore's¹ I met Tennyson. His brother Frederick was with "the royal Alfred," as Woolner used to call him. The two brothers resembled each other much, even for brothers—both slow, grave, rather strong, tall, and heavy in the shoulders, with the habits and aspect of a more advanced period of life than their years warranted. There were also Millais the handsome, and Wilkinson the medical-spiritualistic Swedenborgian, who wrote the book called *The Body in its Connection with Man*, of whom Emerson said he was "most like Bacon of living men." Tennyson was the unconventional man, indifferent to the most of topics, with little talk: I should think he never tried to say "a good thing"; and had he been once induced to enter the club of which Laman Blanchard, Douglas Jerrold, Forster, the Landseers, etc., were members,

¹ [Later in the same year, after the departure of the emigrants.—ED.]

and into which Kenny Meadows did me the honour one evening to introduce me, he would have taken good care never to go again. Both of the brothers seemed to me to be alike in this : they had settled everything in their own minds, and therefore did not care to hear other people's opinions. The harmony between Tennyson's personality and his poetry was perfect, and so it was with Garth Wilkinson, who was as tall and as straight as a spear, and looked steadily at you from behind his spectacles as if he saw your thoughts as distinctly as your nose, while Tennyson cared little and noted little of either. I had known Wilkinson partially as a young man editing Blake's *Songs of Innocence*, because he discerned in them Swedenborgianism and spiritualistic magnetism ; now he was a scientific spiritualist, and since that time has written, and, I believe, published, poems of the Blake kind, as directly coming from superhuman agents, superhuman to us as bodily mortals. This is legitimate development, yet he and all other believers in the new version of our connection with another world seem only groping in the dark for something intangible. Their assertion of what they do not understand looks like a new species of insanity. These poems, which he claims to have been constrained to write without his own volition, are many of them contradictory nonsense, at other times curiously profound. Here is one, very fine in a way—the doggerel way of Blake—

SATURDAY NIGHT

The week's curtain folded round
Time with a solemn sound—
Life sleeps within its folds,
And the past like dreams it holds.

Surely it is God's intent
That life should still be blent
With sleep, when every tread
Has memory overhead.

So may we learn each glance
Of the great Whole's countenance,
When met on shore of heaven
Will be good and true and even.

I had just returned from Paris, where I had gone on leave of absence on account of bad health.¹ I had gone there, not knowing anywhere more amusing to go to, and because a Newcastle friend, an old gentleman who had been sheriff and alderman, had a picture he wanted Baron Neuerkirke to purchase for the Louvre, which led to some amusing negotiations. While I was there, Louis Napoleon was finishing his triumphal progress through the provinces, and then returned to Paris virtually Emperor. Humiliating and in fact wonderful! I went with the boys and functionaries of the École Municipal Chaptal to the front of the Madeleine. Their appearance there

¹ [I find from a pocket-book diary that the date of this leave of absence and visit to Paris was October 1852. The meeting with Tennyson seems to have been later in the same month, as he passed through London on his way home to Newcastle. It was thus just before the *coup d'état* of December.—ED.]

was enforced. An indignant father, after many high words, carried away his son from what he considered a humiliating spectacle. Then came Louis Napoleon with thousands of cavalry and brazen music, and the clergy streamed out of the sacred fane to congratulate their saviour from republicanism! This Bonapartism was the exciting subject in England. The chances of the French setting foot in this country were then occupying the public mind. Tennyson feared they would, thought it indeed certain. Louis Napoleon with those splendid troops (!) would invade, the invasion would take us by surprise, and be successful. That the whole country would rise against the invaders was, in his mind, the next probability; and the end of the historic chapter would be the combined European invasion of France, the destruction of Paris and its suppression for ever, with the dismemberment of France! An end just and proper.

Such was Tennyson's map of immediately coming events at that day. His brother, Patmore, and others agreed with him. He hated the French with a hatred that made me love him, and he has been true to his feeling to the present, I believe; at least, when the Swinburnian passion for French things, for Victor Hugo and others, had infected nearly all our young writers, he warned us against degrading our art "with poisonous honey stolen from France." After twenty-five years the prophetic programme, although altogether a mistake as to the invasion of England, has been in some measure

realised ; and if France obeys her fighting tendencies again, may be perhaps fully completed.

We spoke also of Woolner's venture. Both Carlyle and Tennyson I was told were in favour of it, but I could not arrive at any conclusion on the point. As to Woolner himself, he had been wound up to a high pitch of expectation before he left, looking forward to certain fortune, and limiting himself in point of time to four years only. It was said that Tennyson had asked him ; "Will you be content with twenty thousand ?" immediately adding, "men are never contented about money, so I need not ask." This was not thought extravagant, but the expectations from gold-digging were then beyond reason. I suggested modestly that he might be contented with less, that a steady worker was by the highest estimate only able to make £1200 a year ; but every one ridiculed that paltry sum ! and I hid my diminished head.

I now avail myself of a letter from D. G. R., under the indefinite date of Tuesday, 1852, mainly about his coming north to see me, which he did next year, as already related—

The most important event among us lately has been Woolner's exodus to the diggings. I saw him on board the vessel on Thursday. He is accompanied, as I think you know, by Bernhard Smith and Bateman, all of them plentifully stocked with corduroys, sou'-westers, jerseys, firearms, and belts full of little bags to hold the expected nuggets. Hunt, William, and myself deposited them in their four months' home with a due mixture of solemnity and joviality. Woolner desired more than once his par-

ticular remembrances to you. All his friends congratulate him on the move, with the sole exception of Carlyle, who seems to espy in it some savour of the mammon of unrighteousness. Tennyson was especially encouraging; at his house at Twickenham Woolner spent two days of his last week. The great Alfred even declares that were it not for Mrs. T. he should go himself. His expectations seem, however, to be rather poetical, as he gravely asked Woolner if he expected to come back with £10,000 a year.

As to other news of friends—

Hunt has got an offer for his picture, the cash to be paid by degrees. He has been staying at Oxford lately, painting the portrait of some don there, and has got a commission to paint a picture of sheep only—a treat for him. Millais has been at Oxford too, as witness on a trial regarding the property of some estate or some contested will. The judge, on hearing his name, asked if he was the painter of that exquisite picture in the Academy. This looks like fame. Deverell is living at Kew, and painting there. Brown has removed to Hampstead, Hannay to Highgate; the latter is to be married in the spring of next year. Allingham has been in town and is now off to Flanders for a short trip.

Then, again, under the date 7th May 1853, he says they have now heard from Woolner, and had a sea-log of his, which “is infinitely amusing, and must be sent to you as soon as possible.” I duly received this elaborate log, in which nearly every sunset was described, showing his landscape proclivities, with other interesting matter. Some years after I wished to see this diary, and found he had lost sight of it. It had gone astray.

Woolner and his friends had a wonderful voyage,

and on arriving at Melbourne he strangely enough found in the house of the Governor (Bateman's cousin) his own Red Riding Hood. The party, Howitts, etc., were separated by an accident happening to their cart on the road inland, and Woolner with B. Smith went on by themselves to the Ovens, where they stayed three weeks. By Woolner's request the P.R.B.'s at home sent him chinks, etc., which he might use in last resort ; and on the 12th of April the P.R.B.'s all made portraits of one another, which were forwarded to him. There was an appointment with Woolner that his party were to make portraits of each other at the corresponding hour there. Whether this was ever carried out I never heard. Such appointments rarely succeed at such a distance.

Rossetti's next communication to me was from his new address, 14 Chatham Place, overlooking the river, and gives an account of the great family loss by the death of his grandfather, Polidori, whom I did not know but had often heard spoken of—

He was upwards of ninety years of age, but retained his mental faculties perfect, and even his bodily ones, to an extraordinary degree. He died from congestion of the brain, which rendered him suddenly insensible. In this state he remained for many hours, and died without recovering consciousness. He was one of the people in the world for whom I had a real affection, and had you known him I am sure you would have loved and admired him. Our family may wait long now for so stout a branch.

* * * The best news is of Woolner. Not, indeed, that he has exactly become a gold beetle, or stands any chance of building images such as Nebuchadnezzar

the king set up, but images of some kind it seems possible he may at some time be allowed to make. After seven months' digging, during which time he and B. Smith went to all the principal diggings in succession, they gave it up as a losing game; having made £50 worth of gold apiece, and spent each about £90. Nor does Woolner consider they were peculiarly unfortunate, but it would seem the palmy days of gold-seeking are over. Their work appears to have been most laborious; working up to their knees in water so cold that their lower limbs were without sensation, while the perspiration streamed down their bodies from the excessive heat of the sun; not daring to stop for five minutes scarcely, during the whole day, lest the earth should fall in upon them. Woolner, however, says he shall always be glad to have gone through this, as it has given him a strength and feeling of life which he never knew before, and also an intense appreciation of the smallest amount of ordinary comfort; in short, the faculty of content.

On leaving the digging Bernhard Smith went to a farm of his brother's on the Campaspe, and Woolner returned to Melbourne to try sculpture! In this he has had a good deal more success. He is staying with Dr. Howitt (a brother of William), who as well as his family appear to be most cordial and excellent, and to exert themselves in every way to advance Woolner's affairs. So he has done several medallions at twenty-five guineas each. One is of the Governor, Mr. La Trobe, and he has a prospect of a commission for a statue of the Queen, to be erected at Melbourne. In case of getting this he will probably return to London next year.

All this news reached his father two months back, and yesterday I had two letters from the dear old boy myself, which I shall send you when one or two here have seen them. He says, "Dear W. B! how sorry I was to hear of his indisposition. I shall be glad to hear of his poems being out. Will you send a copy of them here for me? do not fail in this, there's a good fellow."

In the conclusion of his letter Rossetti refers to his promised etching for my poem, and to my Boccaccio picture—a picture I had sent for exhibition at the British Institution in Pall Mall, the subject being Boccaccio taking a gift of money from the city of Florence to Dante's daughter, then in a nunnery at Ravenna. "And," he adds, "by the bye, do you mean after all to settle in London again, or to go out at some distant period in Newcastle, and have written over you—

"Here lies Duns Scotus
Who died of lotus"?

I was grieved to hear at this time of Deverell's having got into very bad health, so much so that the doctors considered he had not above six months to live. Rossetti had invited him kindly to visit him, as he was not altogether happy at home; but this he never did. Not at all aware of his great danger, he continued planning new pictures, one of which represented and was called, strange to say, "The Doctor's Last Visit."

Woolner's return to London finished the Australian episode in his life. He wrote to me under date of 23rd October 1854:—

MY DEAR W. B.—You see I am back in England again, restored to civilisation; and I merely write to announce that important fact, and to congratulate you upon publishing your poems in the collected form I have long desired.

I have not returned like a conquering hero, loaded with honours and with chariots of riches in my train, nor

have I a huge beard, brawny limbs, and weather-worn bronzed countenance. I do not intend buying up some two dozen defunct noblemen's estates, and living like swarthy Sultan in voluptuous imbecility, but have to set to work for daily bread much in the same way I had to do before leaving in 1852. Very great weakness not to have succeeded better, you will say. True, but I should not have returned so soon, had I not returned to look after a statue of W. Wentworth, to be put up to his glory in Sydney. I am not sure of getting it now after coming all this way ; but having thought the matter over, I concluded this course of coming home was the best. I saw Carlyle the other evening, who said he was glad to see me back, and congratulated me on *not* being successful in my gold-seeking. In this as in everything, how different are his opinions from the world's !

I should vastly like to have a long chat with you ; but that I suppose is out of the question till next summer, but even then you will divide your stay into half-hour visits. I have heard a good deal about you from various friends, but shall nevertheless be rejoiced if you will write me a note of gossip when you have leisure. I would myself send you a longer yarn, but I have little time till I get settled. As I said before, this is merely to tell you of my return. Government should, no doubt, have fired cannon all over England ; the *Times* should have published an express, a day of feasting might have been commanded throughout the realm ; I need then not have announced myself in this insignificant way. Ever yours,

THOMAS WOOLNER.

The evening on which I met the Tennysons at Patmore's house in Kentish Town, Millais and I walked into town together. He had been at the British Museum that forenoon, renewing his acquaintance with a keeper of one of the galleries who had patronised him when, a very little boy,

he drew from the marbles there. Mr. Salmon was as great as ever, hoped he was getting on well. *Hoped* so! Alas, the fame he had acquired had not reached Mr. Salmon! "Was I not mortified," said Millais, "when I found he had never heard of our doings, or seen my name in a paper." Mr. Salmon had a *penchant* for one room and a superstition about another, which had been offered him by way of change, two successive keepers having died from it in very close succession. "It is a very fine room, sir," said Mr. Salmon, "and I considered the proposal—a finer room than my room, but I would rather not be the keeper of that room, sir, I would really!"

Millais went on to tell me that after parting from Salmon he went up to one of the students and began innocently to ask him questions, where all the statues came from and what was the use of drawing from them—what he thought of those green pictures in the Exhibition everybody was talking about? The boy began to expatiate on the peculiarities of the said pictures, and thought them clever, "especially Millais." Did he know Millais? Was he really a clever fellow? Oh yes, he knew him; Millais will be a great man yet. "There! the fellow pretended to know me—that made up for the loss of the Salmon; but I moved off in case he might take a good look at me and recognise me to be the great man, which would have spoiled the fun."

During my visit to London in the summer of 1853, Alexander Munro was modelling my profile,

in a friendly spirit making a medallion of me. He was doing the same for Millais, and there we met again. Millais mounted the sitter's chair vacated by me, when I observed for the first time the red mark on his left eye or eyelid. All men of genius, unhappily, are not so handsome as Millais was then. I asked him how he had caught the irritation, or wound, or whatever it was. No, he had not caught it, he had had it all his life; "there are spots on the sun, you know!" was his exclamation as he laughingly placed himself in position on the model's chair. I laughed too, but looked at him narrowly. There was no expression of self-conceit or vanity, it was mere exuberance of spirits and amusing chaff. He was about to leave town for Scotland; he and his brother, with John Ruskin and his wife. This party of four were to stop on the way in Northumberland at a great house called Wallington to visit Sir Walter Trevelyan. Of this visit I was to hear a good deal afterwards. It has been already alluded to, in a quotation from a D. G. R. letter, but the house of Wallington and the name of Trevelyan were to be shortly all-important in my history.

CHAPTER XXIII

HOLMAN HUNT'S "LIGHT OF THE WORLD"—HE GOES TO
THE EAST—DEATH OF DEVERELL—MISS ANNA
MARY HOWITT—THE HOGARTH CLUB.

IN 1853, if I remember right, Holman Hunt was painting "The Light of the World." I found him so employed, in a small drawing-room in the corner house near the old church of Chelsea, with an elaborate arrangement of screens and curtains so as to get the dark effect he wanted. The lay figure held a lighted lantern, and Hunt, painting by good daylight in the farther part of the room, peeped into the mysterious gloom by a hole. The arrangement had a bogey effect, and the amount of exercise made it the pursuit of painting under difficulties certainly. He was at that time, however, a Hercules, though not a giant, and after an economical dinner of savoury fish and ginger beer which my long walk made excellent, evening coming on, we crossed the street and jumped into a wherry, the management of which he was quite accustomed to, and he pulled me up to Hammersmith and back again. The pains he took

to get every point of colour, and light, and shade as true to nature, and as perfect as possible, struck me more and more the nearer I saw his ways and contrivances. He was determined to carry out his accurate method of representation even when the subject was so removed from the realities of life that an abstract treatment, a rendering of "the idea in his mind," as Raphael is reported to have preferred, would have emancipated him from the slavery of painting lamplight in daytime, and of rendering moonlight by artificial means. The omnibus groom, taking his horses home at one o'clock in the morning, used to see him working at open window from nature when real moonlight was to be had. The picture was finished at last, and its success threw all other successes into the shade.

I may interpolate here from a later time an incident and a note relating to this picture, its popularity and its conception. For the first time in this country a picture became a subject of conversation and general interest from one end of the island to the other, and indeed continued so for many years, as the following incident shows, occurring so lately as August 1883 in this remote parish in Ayrshire. In this stronghold of the Covenanters in old times our present *minister* holds an annual open-air preaching in the churchyard surrounding the ruin (now carefully preserved) of the ancient parish church. Miss Boyd and her guests usually join this congregation, the ruin being quite near her house of Penkill, of which I shall have much to say on a

future page. One of her cottagers sets chairs for us, so that we appear the most important auditors ; all the others—old farmers, shepherds with the collie dogs, and lasses in their Sunday finery—sitting or lying in picturesque groups on the grass or on the tombstones. In this striking scene, with the sun gradually descending behind Arran, and still gilding the broken walls that formed a background to the clergyman's head, he gave out the text, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," and my excited curiosity was soon gratified by his description of the work that "a living artist of great fame had painted." Nothing of the symbolism had escaped him ; his description was intelligent, and was listened to with breathless interest. Somebody said when he saw Thomson's *Seasons* on a cottage window-sill, "This is true fame ;" how much more might we say so on hearing a Scottish minister arrest the attention of his congregation by dilating on the "Light of the World"! I thought Hunt would like to hear of this, and accordingly wrote him. Here is his reply, sufficiently interesting to be here preserved :—

DRAYCOTT LODGE, FULHAM, S.W.,
19th August 1883.

MY DEAR SCOTT—Your letter, with its scene of the congregation on the hillside and its beautiful background, came in due course, but its recipient was and is a great invalid about fourteen hours in each day, with what is decided to be spasmodic asthma, brought on by hard work and incessant long-continued anxiety ; and so the response has been long in forming itself. To-day I have been idling, lounging about, reading and snoozing through-

out sunlight, and probably in consequence of this rest this evening I am unusually free from difficulty of breathing, and so I can write, and I gladly take advantage of the opportunity to chat with you—Northern Vitruvius of latter days.

And so in the roofless, wall-less, doorless church there was the lesson thought to be profitable, which came for my hand to be made intelligible through the eye when I was young, and I had myself been much in want of some certainty as to whether there was indeed a Master who cared for aspirations in us, higher than the attempt to find happiness without intentional injury to others, in our short life. It is a gratification to me to think that the meaning I accepted at the time, is through my effort made of active use to others, for indeed I painted the picture with what I thought, unworthy though I was, to be divine command, and not simply as a good subject. When I found it I was reading the Bible, critically determined if I could to find out its flaws for myself, or its inspiration. I was in great anxiety on the point. I did not want to be hoodwinked by desire to find out claim in man for eternity or evidence that God had spoken to our predecessors, if, indeed, this was the delusion of weakness; and I did not want longer to be trammelled by the vanity of the contemporaneous mind which decided that all questions too intangible for submission to the rule of professed critics were undeserving of attention—the vanity which urged my companions so often to laugh at the credulity of inferior minds, and to take the decision of finished poets in vogue—Byron and Shelley, to wit—as final, not for perfection of poetry only, but for wisdom and eternal insight. Between the two fears I had difficulty in settling a course. Youth offered me bribes on both sides—pleasures of the material or of the spiritual kind—and as I was weighing all I came upon the text, “Behold . . .” If I had ever read Longfellow’s translation of Lopes de Vega’s Sonnet, I did not remember it; but the figure of Christ standing at the door haunted me, gradually coming

in more clearly defined meaning, with logical enrichments, waiting in the night—ever night—near the dawn, with a light sheltered from chance of extinction, in a lantern necessarily therefore, with a crown on His head bearing that also of thorns; with body robed like a priest, not of Christian time only, and in a world with signs of neglect and blindness. You will say that it was an emotional conversion, but there were other influences outside of sentiment. I want to tell how the picture, since we are speaking of it, came. When I returned to town with background painted, and design complete, Miss Siddal came once saying that she had seen the exact design in a Catholic shop window. She was quite positive of the complete similarity—night, lantern, crown, orchard, overgrown door, and all. Time was precious to me then, but I went down to Covent Garden at once, and saw that she had let my design fill her mind and invest a very poor lackadaisical German figure of Christ, holding the end of His conventional robe over His arm, knocking at a meaningless door, with all the poetic features of mine. I had almost concluded that I must give up my subject, but when I saw the German print I felt more interest in my design, and I worked at it as steadily as my very restricted and borrowed means would allow. When at last it was finished, put by many times for three years, I had won better fortune, and I was able to find a purchaser for it in my dear old friend Mr. Combe. Many times since that day, when the critics as usual assailed it violently, I have been comforted by hearing of persons in sickness who knew not the painter's name, and troubled themselves not at all about the manner of its production, or the artistic question, speaking of the picture as one that had haunted them and given them hope—the hope that makes death have no terrors. It is not egotism that makes me pleased at this. I look to it as one of the testimonies—a very little one—of the greatness and necessity of the creed it illustrates. I know that I seem behind my age in the contempt I have for all its critical condemnations

of the evidence on which revealed religion stands. It is the age of critics. If a man gets up and says that he is a critic, and that he has discovered the fallacy of such a pretension, he is welcomed and worshipped, no matter what nonsense he utters. Renan's works I have read exhaustively; they are, spite of the scholarship which makes them worth reading, simply puerile nonsense, with about as much knowledge of his subject as Payne Knight had of the Elgin marbles; and other critics and theorists propound their views from some little fact which they have discovered, as though the whole business of the universe were opened to them, when the little carpings at words in the Bible and the discovery of great merit in some independent revelation like Buddhism makes them overlook the cardinal facts that remain—that, to wit, from the little beginning of Abraham's leaving Padan-Aram, the whole of the active-minded people of the world have been blessed with an inspiring religion, which has endowed Shakespeare and the poor in the hospital equally with noble and patient hope; that whether Daniel was written when it pretends to have been or not, that it certainly existed 200 years before the moment when, as it said, Christ came, 700 years or more before the world was split up into ten kingdoms, some strong and some weak, all existing simultaneously. On the other hand, we have a theory that there is no personal God, no Father watching over us and judging us, which in 100 years is steadily disintegrating society and producing fatal consequences, of which we as yet see not the end, which, as I believe, will be very terrible before long. Here is a long screed. Kind greetings to Miss Boyd.—Yours ever,

W. HOLMAN HUNT.

From the time of Hunt's success D. G. R. continued for years to be unknown to the public as an artist, but to gain in the respect of the intelligent, while the man himself gradually underwent a surprising development. His curious materialistic piety

disappeared, burst like a soap-bubble, and the superficial prismatic colours vanished into air. The early views of self-culture and self-sacrifice we have noticed underwent a similar *bouleversement*.

Have I yet mentioned Walter Deverell's picture from *Twelfth Night*? This handsome boy, with the embryo picture in his mind, was with his mother one day; she was buying a bonnet in Cranbourne Alley, I believe, when Walter's dark eyes espied in the twilight of the back-shop a lovely face with lovely hair—regular small features with a massive surrounding of auburn, the very hair for Viola. He whispered to his mother that his future was made if he could get this fair damsel to sit, and by the maternal intervention he accomplished his object. This was the first appearance of Miss E. E. Siddal in the artistic world, and was all-important to Rossetti. He was at that time creating his most poetical works as a painter—small water-colour pictures of lovely Arthurian sentiment and invention, done entirely without nature and a good deal in the spirit of illuminated MSS., with very indifferent drawing and perspective nowhere. Now he would paint beauty only: women and flowers were the only things in this world worth imitating.

A year or two after in midsummer, the time when I always visited London, Howitt having returned from Australia, and being with Mary Howitt and Anna Mary, their daughter, in Normandy, I found D. G. R. was to be seen in their charming cottage on the Hampstead Road, called

the Hermitage. In the garden of this cottage was a painting-room or study, covered with ivy, approached by outside wooden steps. I walked up to see him in the cool of the evening; the servant directed me up these steps, and I found myself in the romantic dusk of the apartment face to face with Rossetti and a lady whom I did not recognise, and could scarcely see. He did not introduce her; she rose to go. I made a little bow, which she did not acknowledge; and she left. This was Miss Siddal. Why he did not introduce me to her I cannot say. Perhaps the maid should have called him instead of allowing me to invade the studio without warning; she may have even done it for a lark; for myself, I had not yet heard of such a person as Miss Siddal. Perhaps Rossetti was already beginning to revise his intention of marriage: an even way of life the most unlikely possible to suit his late development. She began to think herself a genius too, and did small, quaint, quasi-poetical imitations of his works at that time, and then, her health not being good, by Ruskin's assistance she went to Mentone.

The paradoxical conclusion that women and flowers were the only objects worth painting, was brought about by the appearance of other ladies besides Miss Siddal coming within his orbit. Among these the most important was one who must have had some overpowering attractions for him, although I never could see what they were. He met her in the Strand. She was cracking nuts with her teeth, and throwing the shells about; seeing Rossetti

staring at her, she threw some at him. Delighted with this brilliant *naïveté*, he forthwith accosted her, and carried her off to sit to him for her portrait.

For years about that time, being fully occupied, I cannot say that I continued to take the same interest in Rossetti as I had done at first when his early poems had drawn my whole heart to him. The religion of the fourteenth century and Dante as its great poetical exponent were not attractive to my progressist opinions; as poetical material I preferred the tenth, which dwelt less on hell-fire and more on the miraculous power of faith, and I rather despised the worshippers of the Renaissance, to whom real life was less than art, and the nineteenth century less than the sixteenth.

The great International Exhibition of 1851 had brought about a very beneficial change in the art-education of the country which occupied my attention, and my health was not in a safe state. I had long wished to see Munich, and to be able to speak with knowledge of the school of fresco painters there; also to visit Nürnberg, the home of Albert Dürer and the Little Masters. These serious interests all occupied me, and the last made me take lessons in German, and visit Bavaria. My German master was a round little man who had come to Newcastle when the Queen's marriage to Prince Albert brought the German language into favour and fashion.

This Continental visit was distinguished by my

going not alone, but taking my wife and two friends as far as Paris. It was the year of the Paris International Exhibition (1854), and the Salon also was open at the time of our visit. I had also two rather curious errands confided to me by a friend, Oswald Murray, a youth whose promise, literary or other, was cut off shortly afterwards by death. One of these was to deliver to the sculptor David d'Angers the pen of Mrs. Opie, left him in her will as a remembrance. This pen was a quill, ornamented with beads by the hand of the aged lady. The other was to claim, as a friend's representative, the watch of the Abbé Lamennais, also a relic of the deceased bequeathed by will. David d'Angers we found in his immense studio, surrounded by the busts innumerable of the illustrious men and women of the age, some of them, Victor Hugo in particular, gigantic in size. Our visit did not take him by surprise. The amiable old sculptor gave us a little account of many of his sitters, and pointed out the figure of Mrs. Opie herself, young and pretty, a record of the past. The old-fashioned silver watch of Lamennais was confided to my charge by his executor without much difficulty; from its aspect it was intrinsically worth nothing, but it was the time-keeper for the dear old man's prayers in his youth as well as work in his maturer age.

I found the works of the greater masters of the Bavarian school exactly what my friend Tom Sibson, and a considerable collection of the engravings from their triumphs, had led me to expect. They repre-

sented art from an exclusively intellectual point of view. History was academic; sacred art was conventional; but both were noble and dignified, earnestly and conscientiously followed by men who trained themselves into set moods of thought and forms of expression. But they had thrown off their individuality in the ambitious effort, and they had shed off all the accidents and charms of painting, finding realities not good enough. One felt in danger of perishing, losing manhood and becoming an artistic aristocrat. Considering all our English habits, it was clear to me that the attempt to create such a school in this country was simply out of the question. It could not amalgamate with any one English feature, with our morals, our manners, our poetry, our Shakespearianism, our criticism, our analytical habits, our constitutionalism, our religion; and yet it was the greatest, that is to say the most perfected, school, according to its own canon, worthy of all regard. And this shows that as sculpture was antique, and in a way impossible to us moderns, so pictorial art for its own sake is mediæval; that is to say, historical and religious art belongs to the uncertain light of faith. Here in Germany, in Bavaria at least, landscape was in its infancy, *genre*, social life pictures were altogether without charm or truth; presumably there could exist scarcely any popular or vital interest in the painter's calling. I painted a picture from the balcony at the end of Albert Dürer's house in Nürnberg, showing the open space at the Thiergarten Thor, with the

Schloss beyond, and Albert looking out at the passing crowd. Already since then the German school has undergone two changes, and that of Overbeck and Cornelius is gone.

Let me now return to my correspondence, and quote what may be of interest in connection with my friends. After the opening of 1854, under date of 28th January, Alexander Munro writes me : " Hunt has fled to the desert with Walter Seddon, and Millais is out of the way, still love-making or possibly poring over his portrait of ' Ruskin in the Trossachs,' which he reports to be his best work ! Deverell, poor fellow, is dying ; given over by the doctors some time ago." This last sad intimation was too prophetic.

Ten days later I find a note from Rossetti which deserves to be entered here, as it gives a sympathetic record of the end of that youth, who was beautiful as " the morning-bright Apollo, young Apollo," and who was the first of that band of noble friends

To cross the sea where no wind blows,
Into the land that no one knows.

D. G. R. felt his loss more than any one, and communicated the tidings of his death to me a week after. His note was dated 9th February 1854. Two days before that he had been present at the funeral along with Brown, Munro, and Stephens.

You were one of those [he says] to whom I thought at once of writing when I first heard the tidings, but the

task is not a pleasant one. Deverell's complaint, which had long been called disease of the kidneys, had lately declared itself as dropsy, and he had to take to his bed just at the time he was to have come to me. He was, as you know, very reckless of his health, and had put off coming to me in order to go daily for some time to a house near his own, where he was making sketches of furniture, etc., for his last picture, which remains unfinished. I saw him just a week before his death, when he was congratulating himself on some (what he thought good, but, as I heard afterwards, really most dangerous) symptoms. He said to me, however, "I must not halloa before I am out of the wood." On Thursday morning he was told that he could not live through the day, which he heard quite calmly, only saying he wished they had told him before, but that he supposed he was man enough to die. At four o'clock his end came: he was conscious to the last, without special pain. Millais, who had been most attentive to him all through his illness, was in the house at the time, but was not allowed to see him. I suppose I should not either, though I cannot help regretting that I did not happen to go that day, thinking he might have seen me, or might have had something to say. One of the last times I saw him he rose up in his bed as I was leaving, and embraced and kissed me, and I thought then that he began to believe his end was near. I should have gone much oftener lately, but the doctor had given express orders that he should see no one; and the last time I saw him was contrary to that injunction. I had no older or more intimate friend, nor one who, in spite of persevering ill-luck, could more have justified high hopes for the future.

Deverell's picture from *Twelfth Night*, in which Rossetti sat for the Jester, and Miss Siddal for Viola, they sent to Liverpool, thinking that Mr. Millar would have bought it; and after his death Gabriel

tried to sell his other works, but without success. He had no success whatever, I believe.

In the continuation of his letter Rossetti went on to speak once again of his long-deferred promised etching for my poem of *Rosabell*, or, to call it by his name, *Mary Anne*.

The steel is unstolen as yet! [he said]. You really do not know how hard pressed I have been by time and occupation. I really hope you will put off the publishing till Christmas, which, moreover, seems to me advisable without reference to my convenience! The proof-sheets of *Mary Anne (Rosabell)* have been read by Hunt, the Howitts, and others, who have all very greatly admired it. I have positively promised the Howitts that I will do my best to bring you to them one evening when you are next in London. Miss H. (Anna Mary) saw your *Prince Legion* lately at the house of a lady whom I also know, and who, as far as I could learn from researches on the subject, had actually bought it! and seems to be a disciple! Send at once to the publisher for the money and invest it in something—say a shirt-collar!

In my search for this interesting letter I came on another, written a month later by a lady mentioned in it, Miss Anna Mary Howitt, the authoress of the fresh and genuine *Art Student in Munich*. A picture of hers which had been unfortunate at the British Institution she had sent to the Portland Gallery, to which place I had also sent my "Hexham Market-place," as well as my "Dürer Platz of Nürnberg." This letter is amiable and kind. I cannot help adding it.

THE HERMITAGE, WEST HILL, KENTISH TOWN,
7th March 1854.

DEAR MR. SCOTT—As it is always pleasant to know when one's work has given a deal of pleasure, this note comes to tell you that yesterday at the Portland Gallery, looking round to see what neighbours my own picture had got, my eyes fell on a delightfully quaint bit of an old German town. Was I not instantly transported in spirit into mediæval Nürnberg? Was it not delightful to stand in that queer gallery with Albrecht Dürer himself against his background of Adam and Eve, and gaze down with him upon the market-place all astir with knights and ladies? Oh! it was vastly pleasant: all the gables and towers, and rambling old houses, did my heart good. They even recalled the warm mouldering smell peculiar to those south German towns, and how pleasant and *heiter*, as they would say there, was that clear blue heaven overhead.

There was, too, in another room, another primitive market-place, an English one, "Hexham Market-place," which gave me almost as much pleasure; but having a first love for the Nürnberg, and, as you know, a weakness for Germany, I remain true to Albrecht Dürer. And so, wishing you all good wishes for both, believe me, with kind regards to Mrs. Scott, yours sincerely,

A. M. HOWITT.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which began in 1848, and, properly speaking, culminated with the publication of the *Germ*, the four numbers of which were published in the first half of 1850, was of short duration. Thomas Woolner left for the gold-fields of Australia in 1852, and Holman Hunt disappeared for the East in the beginning of 1854. Shortly after this time Millais was the most successful man in England in connection with art,

while Rossetti had mooned over the picture "with thirty figures in it," and also over the picture suggested by my poem, which he called "Found." He had then given over oil-painting, and shrank from exhibiting the small water-colour works so peculiar to himself, and admirable in many ways, so charming in mediæval spirit, altogether the best things he has yet done, if one admits the maxim, *Art for art's sake*; and the days of the intimacy and fellow-feeling of the Brotherhood were nearly over.

As to the bond of union of that so-called Brotherhood, it was never very definite. On the cover of the *Germ* William Rossetti printed a sonnet which was intended to express the motive or principles of the body, in literature as well as in art :

When whoso merely hath a little thought
Will plainly think the thought that is in him—
Not imaging another's bright or dim,
Not mangling with new words what others taught :
When whoso speaks, from having either sought
Or only found,—will speak, not just to skim
A shallow surface with words made and trim,
But in that very speech the matter brought.
Be not too keen to cry—"So this is all !
A thing I might myself have thought as well,
But would not say it for it was not worth !"
But ask, "Is this Truth ?" for 'tis still to tell
That, be the theme a point or the whole earth,
Truth is a circle perfect, great or small.

When one has mastered this production, though indeed it would almost need a Browning Society's

united intellects, it will be found to mean that the only desirable and vital workmanship is that which honestly and directly expresses our own conceptions and observations ; and this is the one excellence we find in all the works of the brethren. Rossetti was the first to depart from the circle and to repudiate the other leaders, who made their impression at once, while he disappeared from public view as an artist for a series of years. I find, under the date 24th February 1854, a note proposing a Sketching Club, which is, as far as any evidence in my possession extends, the last sign of united action among any of the men so bound together a few years earlier. This note says :

I write this very short note to tell you of a project started to-night at Millais', which I engaged to communicate to you and one or two others immediately, viz. a Sketching Club, to be called the *Folio*. The following is the plan in the rough : a folio is to be sent round to all the members in rotation, each one to put in a drawing whenever it reaches him, taking out his former one. Eighteen members have been named conjecturally, the majority to be got by Millais.

Holman Hunt.	Richard Doyle.
Millais.	Arthur Hughes.
C. Collins.	Mark Anthony.
F. M. Brown.	Inchbold.
W. B. Scott.	Alex. Munro.
Rossetti.	Wolf.
F. G. Stephens.	Carrick (?)
Halliday.	Hon. Mrs. Boyle (E.V.B.)
John Leech.	Lady Waterford.

A meeting of as many of our immediate circle as can

be got together is to be held at my place on Saturday evening next, when William, who is to be Secretary, will read *Rules* to the Society, and when I hope to be able to give in a letter from you, giving us your adherence. Might it not be made a first-rate thing? The two ladies closing the list are both great in design. Let me hear in time. Hunt, as you know, is gone to the East, but we can get at him. Your affectionate D. G. R.

This scheme, which numbered only three of the original P.R.B.—Woolner being in Australia—was never carried out; the drawings were to be in pen and ink, but even in that material were too laborious for many, and the difference in quality would have been too obvious.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS OF DESIGN CHANGED
INTO A "DEPARTMENT OF ART"—SOME INQUIRIES
INTO THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION ON CHARACTER.

EXACT chronology is of little consequence in these notes. The particular powers of memory I do possess are those that command dates. Dates going out of my power, I may therefore go back or forward a little in my record. The year 1852—the year following the first great International Exhibition,—welcomed with surprise by all the world and by Tennyson our laureate as the Avatar of perpetual peace, began the change in the affairs of the Government scheme for spreading art-education over the country, as I have already mentioned. Hitherto the country did not understand its own needs in the field of artistic taste, and in the improvement of our manufactures, which were materially and constructively so far ahead of other countries. Every functionary employed in the effort to spread knowledge and taste, through schools of design, worked against obstacles both from without and within, hopeless of overcoming them, only trying to hide them, and not to commit

himself by affirming or acting on ideas not universally acknowledged. The Inspector who visited Newcastle just before the change appeared to me the worst I had then seen, and so completely to represent the false position under which we all suffered that I privately celebrated his visit in some satirical verses.

At the time of writing this satire, I did not know the perplexities of the position of this able inspector, but a few months later, as one evening my old and dear friend, Ralph N. Wornum, who had become lecturer to the schools, was sitting with me, I read the verses to him, when he informed me that this very individual was possibly to have been made Director. "But," added the strong man in his deep rich voice, "he will not succeed if I can help it; I hope to be Director myself!" These were revelations to me, but at this very moment a greater revelation was about to be made; the evening paper arrived, and in it we saw Mr. Henry Cole gazetted as placed at the head of a new department, "The Department of Practical Art"! Wornum's surprise was a delightful study. To me it mattered nothing: I was in the midst of my series of pictures of the *History of the English Border* for Wallington Hall,¹ and whether or not, was more inclined to realise D. G. R.'s epitaph, already quoted—

Here lies Duns Scotus,
Who died of lotus,

¹ [There is an error of memory here. We shall find afterwards that the Wallington pictures were not proposed till 1856.—ED.]

than to re-enter London to struggle for mastery which I did not now feel myself fitted for. More spectator than actor, I was and am naturally more somnambulist than either, and feel, moreover, nearly as much interest in observing and assisting others who are more ambitious, as in my own work.

Mr., afterwards Sir Henry, Cole's efficiency on the management of the great 1851 Exhibition had placed him in his now commanding position, and it was well: he, an athlete, able to throw all antagonists one after the other, took the arena in charge, and by administrative ability, indefatigable perseverance, insight and foresight, and also by not disdaining to "work the oracle" when for the public good, organised a new curriculum and new administration, collected the most extensive and admirable Museum of Decorative Art in the world, quadrupled the number of provincial centres, and left our system of art-education more complete than that of any of the older countries in Europe, in the course of twenty years. No amount of ignorance displayed in the public prints, or of editorial impudence, ever touched him. They had no effect upon him at all, so far as I could see, either to make him laugh or cry; and of all men I have ever known, of him alone can this be said. He seemed to see the end to be attained from the first step on the way towards it; in this respect, again, I may say I have a unique admiration for him. The man of partial genius is like the statue

with golden head but feet of clay. Henry Cole was altogether otherwise: he was homogeneous, like bronze to last for ever, solid to resist any hammer.

When I understood and appreciated the new *régime*, I ceased to be humiliated by my connection with the Department of Science and Art, as I had been by my position in the executive of the Schools of Design. To advise the previous administration amidst its plunging blindness was useless, and to obey it was more useless still. Deeply interested in the art-education of the country, and in the North of England, first by my family affairs making my residence there convenient, and afterwards by the connections I formed with the Trevelyan circle and other families, I now began to try to aid the work by lecturing to my senior students, and by publishing the *Half-hour Lectures on the History and Principles of the Arts*¹ and by other means, until the change in the system became entire and I accepted the offer of retirement made in 1864. This is all I need to say about one of the apparent mistakes of my career, which was after all perhaps not a mistake at all. We often say in the battle of life as in the game of chess—Had I only played this, and not that! but had *this* and not *that* been really played, every succeeding move would have been different, and who can affirm the result would have been alto-

¹ [These Half-hour Lectures were given from 1859 onwards, and were published in March 1861.—ED.]

gether happier? Too proud to follow, and by no means ambitious of playing the first fiddle, in fact despising many of the experts who do so, struck dumb by the French phrase applied to some musical expert as the *Bête comme une clarinette*,—I have found my greatest happiness in thinking rightly, rather than in acting successfully.

This I may add in taking leave of schools of art in these notes. After my return to London my connection with the Department continued as artist employed in decoration at South Kensington, and as occasional examiner of the works of all the schools. I wrote a paper, published in the *Fortnightly Review*, October 1870, relating shortly the Department's connection with the history of "Ornamental Art in England," and otherwise kept up my interest in the wonderful development at South Kensington under Sir Henry Cole.

I find I must, even at this advanced period of my narrative, go a long way back to pick up some threads that have dropped from my loom. Whether it was the frame of mind brought about by the death of my brother and state of health of my dear old mother, or the accident of certain pious and dogmatic acquaintances, clerical and other, drawing round us, or perhaps the beginning of the influence might date still farther back, my poem on the perfectibility of the human race having something to do with it, I cannot tell; but I began to consider again, for the first time

since boyhood, I ought to say, the question of religious belief. The influence of a belief in another life I had seen much of in my own family, and its influence on civilisation and public morality is evident enough, but this in private life was so like a baseless sentiment, and in public matters so allied with politics, and so completely a part of a traditional scheme of society, that I had been induced to believe it an imposition like civil law, that is to say, an accumulative quasi-science imposed on mankind for their practical benefit. My wife rushed into the inquiry at once experimentally with all her heart, but it immediately took the form of pastime with her. We were to go to all kinds of *churches*, and get argumentative with all kind of believers; the question in her mind became manifestly a simple one, viz.—does an infusion of religion add to the pleasure or interest of the day?

The most puzzling fact constantly presented to us in actual life, as it is indeed in history—the modern history of Western civilisation at least—is the prevailing necessity for some security about a state after death and for some belief in a conscious supreme power above the laws of nature, yet altogether like ourselves, thinking, seeing, and acting. This would seem to be an *instinct*, that is to say, an innate unreasoning mental requirement underlying human nature, did we not see the whole East, the vast majority of the inhabitants of the world, holding by different

forms of Buddhism, and having neither an anthropomorphic god nor a belief in conscious life after the body ceases to enable us to think, to see, and to act. In everyday life we meet millions who have no metaphysical cogitations whatever, yet showing the most earnest interest in a future life, and holding a mystical theory regarding it. This anxiety is in a way contrary to nature, which has rendered it impossible that we should *know* anything of any life but our present one, and is strongest in those whose mothers have been their sole teachers, and weakest in highly-educated thinkers. Yet many of these, too, in our modern times, the most advanced in all kinds of scientific intellect and the most moral as well, succumb, sometimes in private, to the desire for this knowledge, which a revelation alone can give us. I have been often taken by surprise on probing the minds, either of grocers behind counters, or the self-dependent learned professors in their easy-chairs, to find this redoubtable question circulating in their minds as the blood is circulating in their bodies.

At this time there was a Revival conducted by certain Methodist Societies in the open air on the Town Moor, and there were Sunday evening services by Mormon evangelists, both of which were interesting in a physio-psychological point of view, fearful to behold. The Revival had a penitential character, and the contrition or quasi-contrition was painful to witness and exceedingly difficult to understand. The most noteworthy feature I

observed, was that men and women, who, a few moments before the interval for refreshment, had been groaning with faces on the grass, or shrieking out hysterically, "I see heaven opened!" subsided at once, dried their eyes, called their children about them, and merrily chatted, enjoying their baskets of provender.

At the time of my brother David's death, visiting Professor Nichol at Glasgow, and reaching the railway platform very hurriedly, I jumped into a long third-class waggon, and found myself in a rather odoriferous crowd of manifestly working men with their families. There was no time to change, though I saw I was not welcome, so I jammed myself in. The train moved off, and that instant the whole mass of passengers started at the top of the voice a Mormon hymn—

We go to the land of no commotion!
We go, we go to the promised land—
Will you go? will you go?

In a very nervous frame of mind at the time, and the waggon being nearly dark, I almost fainted. These people were leaving their native country, skilled workmen and their whole families following a mixed impulse in which a theological motive predominated. Mormonism was, must we say is, the religion of emigration.

I penetrated into the Sunday evening Mormon service in Newcastle, and found to my surprise that I was recognised; one of the School of Art students, one of the ablest, was among the initiated. Instead

of a sermon of the usual kind, Brother Speedman, an Angel from the Salt Lake City, addressed his audience on the advantages to be gained by going there. William Rossetti, who was with me, and I myself, not looking upon the meeting as in any way sacred, indulged in some private remarks, and came in for a reprimand. We were evidently not welcomed as possible converts; to us the Angel seemed a squinting, hang-dog fellow, not to be trusted with a sovereign, and we felt strongly inclined to say so. Next class evening I spoke to the young man who had recognised me, and found him really a believer. He lent me *The Book of Mormon*, a book in many chapters of long-winded narrative, connecting the movement with ancient Jewish history. The day is surely past for a new faith, and even for the wilder forms of superstition.

Dr. Lees, the temperance advocate, who was then editing a magazine called *The Truth-Seeker*, had introduced to me, as already mentioned, Mr. George S. Phillips, an enthusiast for mechanics' institutes, and every other means of educating the working men of the North of England, who delivered a lecture on "The Priest, Johannes Ronge, and the Holy Coat of Treves," which lecture he sent me in the shape of a little book. Ronge's great success in making the whole German people ashamed of Bishop Arnoldi and the festival of devotion to the Holy Coat, which had brought together an almost starving population, many having sold their very clothing to complete the pilgrimage and so receive the indulg-

ences, had carried him through in spite of the clerical action against him. This exhibition of the Holy Coat was a revival in its way a little different from the Methodist one on the Town Moor of Newcastle. That was a penitential inquiry into the spiritual state of the inquirers, according to their lights, but Bishop Arnoldi's was effected by a promise of indulgences, purchased by devotion to an old coat, and 500,000 mostly penniless people rushed to Treves. It was an insult to the understanding of the nineteenth century, yet small compared with those additions to the Creed proclaimed from Rome since then, and swallowed by Newman and other converts who have not lost caste by their sacrifice of "the thing we call our reason." Ronge became a European celebrity, but mixing politics with polemics, he had to fly in the year of revolutions. In 1851 he appeared in London, and I invited him to Newcastle. After a little correspondence, we visited him in his cottage at Hampstead. A short, strongly-made man, with an expressive, well-formed face and thick black beard, advanced to meet us with the worst possible attempt at English, ending in unmixed German. We received an exuberant welcome, and were introduced to a lady of goodly presence, the noble Bertha, who had cast in her lot with the apostolic Johannes, and left her humdrum husband in Hamburg, bringing away only her own property and her children. She had prepared tea in the garden, but the *regen und blitzen* drove us into the shelter of the house. It was immediately clear to me that Bertha was a lady

of cultivation, that she had acted on a conviction of right as well as on an impulse of love, and that her daughter, who was growing into womanhood, thought with her and loved her fondly. It was a happy family. Johannes was a simple, open character, with the courage and bodily strength of a Luther, as well as the determination of opinion, without calculating in a prudential way or indeed foreseeing results. Here in England he thought to do what he had done in Germany, viz. establish a humanitarian community, without understanding the different conditions made by the freedom of our numerous denominations and political movements.

I confess Bertha interested me more than the reformer; I took to her and left Johannes to my wife. Then she took from her finger and showed me an immense ring bearing on its great disc a calvary, or *croccione*, telling me it was the ring whereby Johannes married her, and that it had been presented to him in Berlin. Soon, with her handsome, vivid face lighted up, which answered all my difficulties of inquiry better than her words, she had brought forward various mementoes of his triumphs. "But," said she, "Johannes not strong-sure of the people, he not flattered: when drei hundert mensch mit flam-beaux, in night procession in Frankfort, he say to me, 'What trust is there in these? when the light is put out of the pech-fackeln, I am forgot.' And the coaches with ladies that come to taken him from prison, with flowers strewed all the way! He not know me then, but I know him already,—oh yes!"

In Newcastle I got him engaged to lecture, George Crawshay, young Cowen (now old Cowen, M.P.) approving. Large bills were posted, but immediately beside every bill on every hoarding appeared another bill, saying this renegade priest and would-be reformer had run away with his friend's wife! His first lecture was in English, but scarcely intelligible to the mass of the audience, who sat him out as they did Gavazzi; his second lecture was in German.

These bills, emanating from the Catholic priesthood, wounded him, I could see, and rendered his chances of surrounding himself with adherents small indeed. But what concerned me most was that he seemed to have nothing to teach, and no *credo*; he rather evaded than announced his confession of faith, which was only humanitarian, and a species of positivism. Love was to him and to Bertha, as it was to Shelley, both as a man and a poet, a primal motive. But love is the vaguest of virtues, meaning selfishness at the one pole, at the other self-sacrifice. To me this was not a surprise; this shifting doctrine I had seen in practice before, and was to see it again, but I had hoped he might have some metaphysic, and some mystery, or at least some ritual. He had counted so much on his visit that I tried to send him away without breaking his happy self-deception, and he easily clung to the idea that he had made an impression on me and others in Newcastle. Here is the letter he wrote me on his return to town.

LONDON, 13th February 1852.

DEAR FRIEND—Yesterday 10 o'clock I arrived. My travel was a little cold. Ice was upon the windows, and I could not sleep in the waggon. To-day I am in good health, and remember the last four weeks living in your friendly family. It is everywhere I bring not peace but struggle. The new religious ideas that I have to proclaim call up contradictions and enemies, and it is dangerous to invite me. When a numerous congregation is formed, and a numerous party gathered, then it is better. At first men comprehend all things from the external appearance, by and by they penetrate into the grounds and ideas. Therefore we may be content if the people begin to think about the Reformation, or contradict the new movement. This is the first step.

The best is, my dear friend, if you let pass with equanimity the attacks, expecting a right moment for our victory. I will write my biography, publish my book, and then begin with stronger efforts. I have invitations to Sidney (?) Stafford, Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, and Carlisle. Can I introduce the new Reformation into England, and bring into a more intimate connection the English and the German nations for humanity, then I shall be glad, and not regret the grief and pains of the first beginnings in Newcastle. And you, my dear friend, have worked with me, and I will send your name to Germany, and tell my congregations that W. B. Scott has generously helped to propagate the Reformation, and to wave the hand between the great nations.

At the last I thank you warmly for your hospitality. Bertha will write Mrs. Letitia to thank her and her mother for all kindness.—With high esteem,

JOHANNES RONGE.

Had he remained much longer, we found a rebellion would have taken place on the part of our domestics, not on account of his being a married

priest, but because of his early morning habits. He got up at five, lighted his candles and his fire, deluged his whole room with the water of his bath, demanded a cup of coffee, and other matters, and in fact created the devil's delight, at an hour the household held to be still night in the month of January. In this I found Alma Tadema resembled him, when we had him at Penkill, only his bath was in the glen, and Ronge beat him in early rising; in the noise they made they were about equal. An intimation at the end of the first lecture that the speaker was ready to receive visitors and answer questions, brought some clergymen and others; and one in particular, a muscular Christian, the curate of the parish, became for a time our intimate. He was an Irishman, a very high churchman, a mixture of Tory and Communist, and knew no more of metaphysics or theology than a grasshopper. He had one virtue, however: he believed in the efficacy of the sacraments, and would go through fire and water to administer them. My father having been a Baptist, one of a community who leave the initiatory ceremony of baptism till the applicant can confess his creed, made him look upon me as his natural prey. He did not, however, devour me, and in the ensuing summer other official duties occupied him, in the execution of which he came out strong.

This was the furious attack of cholera, which became nearly as bad as the plague in London, fictitiously celebrated by Defoe. As autumn approached with very hot weather, everybody who

could afford to do so left town. Many clergymen did the same ; our muscular curate was about the only efficient one left, after a timid Roman Catholic priest died, and was followed by others of his own persuasion.

If this were the proper place I could copy off from my note-book some very strange particulars noted down at the time.¹ It was electrical weather without wind. Lady Trevelyan afterwards gave me a drawing she did at Morpeth the evening on which the first fatal case occurred in Newcastle, of course unknown to her at the time. The aspect of the clouds was so prismatic, she had got out her colour-box, and certainly the hot lurid impression conveyed by her sketch is very striking. As she sat so employed her paper and clothes were covered with the small flies, aphides, which we in Newcastle had in such numbers that people swept them from the steps of their doors in shovelfuls every morning. I had just returned from Venice, where I had painted a picture, or at least partly painted on a large canvas a picture of the *Horses of St. Mark's*, afterwards bought by Mr. Rathbone of Lancashire ; the School of Design had been advertised to open ; neither my wife nor I cared to leave the town again, even when the deaths rose to 150 a day, when every gutter was white with chloride of lime, every shop smelt of it, and people altogether avoided accosting each other. The classes were nearly deserted, the Mormonite and a few engineers only being left, when, the

¹ [September 1853.—ED.]

keeper's wife succumbing to the disease, the keeper was at once suspended. Another man whom I knew applying for the situation, I immediately appointed him, but when I went next day I found the new man's children waiting to tell me he was dead, and was to be buried at noon! Returning home in the evening that day I met a very plague-like device. Carried along a narrow infected street by two men in the manner of a bath-chair was a caldron of tar blazing like a volcano, leaving behind a trail of red-hot splashes. The natives were advised to open their windows, a bellman preceded the caldron, and the faces of frightened women looking down from windows made a striking picture. Our curate used to drop in to tea—he had no other home open to him, which was a serious deprivation to a man like him, who among old ladies and friendly churchmen used to almost live out—regaling us by his anecdotes. I met him one morning, and learned he had the night before read the service over ten or a dozen coffins, leaving the burial to be completed by the navvies, who were bribed by good pay and plenty of whisky, but now he had been told they had all got so drunk that they had fallen asleep after the liquor was exhausted, leaving the coffins standing in a pile till the morning.

At this very time arrived in Newcastle with the usual introductory letters Mr. Fiott Barker, son of the Consul at Smyrna, and brother of a gentleman in the Foreign Office at that time, when the Turkish and Syrian languages were in demand there. Fiott

was supposed to be a portrait-painter, but he had, when in Rome to practise his art, preferred to smoke his cigarettes in other studios instead of studying in his own, and really could do nothing. Perhaps Fiott's best point was his music ; failing in painting, he began publishing Oriental airs, strangely un-European. These were Arabian hymns, wailed by the dervishes standing up in a circle, calling to each other, " O holy Allah, protect me, Ilullah ! " the processional deprecations of the Devil Worshippers, and many others. These he used to try over, reviving them in his memory by practice at my wife's piano, the music paper by his side, and a pencil sticking out of his moustache in lieu of the accustomed cigarette. But then musical experts laughed at his score as I did at his canvas.

He was an Oriental in many ways ; he did not think it necessary to do himself what he undertook, if any one would do it for him, however imperfectly or hurriedly, and he had complete faith in the maxim, don't do to-day what can be left till to-morrow. So that one way or another he was soon surrounded by difficulties, when one day a tall German gentleman in rags knocked at his door, and was welcomed like a brother. This was Dr. Weingartshofer, whom he had known at Smyrna as physician under the Turkish Government to an Abyssinian expedition. He had now worked his way from New York to London, whence, in a penniless state, hearing that friend Fiott was in the north, he walked through what he designated the most inhospitable country in

the world from London to Newcastle. He had found the greatest difficulty in getting a piece of bread, or a little straw in an open shed to sleep on for a night. Was he Jew, Christian, or Islamite, Viennese or Smyrniote, no one could tell. German was certainly his native tongue, but he knew the classics and Hebrew too, spoke English very well, and knew something of Turkish and Italian. Indeed, he undertook to teach ten languages, and was not found to be quite ignorant in any of them, and though another locust on the green leaves of my time, became one of the most interesting and enigmatical human beings I have ever approached.

The subjects he was most fond of were the fables and stories of Persian origin, those about Khoja Nassreddin in particular, who was to him a prophet or divine teacher. Although the stories themselves were by no means cleanly, and both puerile and unintelligible at times as it appeared to me, doubtless they had an underlying wisdom, if one could arrive at it. For example, Nassreddin is sent by his wife to sell the sow at the market town. A knavish dervish overhears the directions his wife gives him and follows Nassreddin. Nassreddin sits down, the day being hot, and falls asleep, whereon the dervish shaves him, appropriates his collar and his staff, leaves his tall dervish hat on the sleeper's head, and drives away the pig. Nassreddin feels his own shaven head when he wakes, but spying the dervish in the distance, follows, though with hesitation; but when he sees his collar on the thief

and his staff in the rascal's hand, who leads the pig quite naturally, he asks which is Nassreddin and which is the lawful owner of the marketable animal. He accompanies the dervish to market, and when the pig has been sold returns with him, in hopes to find out which is which. When they reach Nassreddin's home, his wife accepts the thievish dervish, appropriates the money, rejects Nassreddin in the high hat. The end is, Nassreddin becomes the dervish, and the dervish becomes Nassreddin, the tall hat of the holy man being the great factor in the transformation.

But his interpretations of some Bible problems suggested his introduction here. His critical elucidation of the Hebrew of the Old and Greek of the New Testaments was to me original and amusing, making a comical contrast to that of more orthodox friends. He explained word by word the passages relating to the patriarchal form of the oath—"Abraham said unto his eldest servant, 'Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: and I will make thee swear by the Lord,'" with other narratives to the same effect. Also that one in Exodus where Moses receives the tables of the law, and asks to see the face of the Lord.

Showing him the little book about the Holy Coat of Treves, I asked him if he knew any particulars about the ancient article and its exhibitor, the Bishop Arnoldi. "Not much: yes, had heard of it, was in the East at the time. But," he asked, "would you like to know what the seamless coat of our Saviour

was?" The seamless coat at Treves has been described or conjectured as in shape resembling a blouse, generally speaking of a brownish colour, but having the wonderful quality of appearing to one nearly violet, to another tending to rose. Certainly I would like to hear his account of the garment, if he had any new light on the subject. Weingartshofer laughed in his guttural manner. He had no new lights, only an old light. The coat was a coat of mail! Jesus had travelled to the East, to the reputed land of wisdom and of ringed mail armour. We know not what he did till thirty years of age. "He was what you might call me," said the singular man a little seriously, "a vagabond or a philosopher. He had acquired wisdom unknown to the Jews—lived now on a theory of life in many points Oriental. 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of humanity hath nowhere to lay His head.' He had been with the Magi in Persia—had gone, possibly, to find those who had visited his mother at the time of the nativity! and this coat was got there as a protection in his future travels and preachings. The Roman soldiers knew it well, and were delighted with it: their centurion said—let me see—in your Bible he says, 'This is indeed the Son of God,' which is nonsense in his mouth, and quite wrongly translated: the centurion said, 'This is indeed a son of Luck!' They say the same in the East still—just as you say, 'This is an adventurer.'"

Our Saviour with a coat of mail under his tunic was an astounding suggestion, jarring mercilessly

with our conceptions of the character, human and divine. It does so with all tradition and all art. Lucifer the light-bearer became long ago the Prince of Evil ; but the speaker of the Sermon on the Mount in a coat of mail would require a few hundred years to accustom us to think it possible. "And yet did he not tell the poor disciples beginning their journeys to buy themselves swords?" replied the inexorable doctor. "The Greek word we translate coat is *χιτών*, a word used by all writers for centuries, a generic rather than a specific term ; but you know neither the Romans nor the Jews used a garment we moderns could call *a coat*. We can only conclude it was an important piece of apparel." Some days after this conversation he returned to the subject ; he had been to the public library of the Literary Society, but had failed to light upon any information. The only allusion he had found he had copied off. It was an assertion in S. Isidore of Pelusium that a seamless, home-made, coarse garment was worn by the lowest class in Galilee. What would Roman soldiers care for an article like that ?

These two visitors vegetated a considerable time in Newcastle, living in a house without any furniture except a kind of divan surrounding their studio or sitting-room, and with little food except *pillaw*, till the Crimean War made an opening for both, when they disappeared under Government patronage, as did also our muscular curate, who had been so efficient in the cholera epidemic, but who knew as much about theology as a grasshopper. Of the Orientals

we never heard again, but of the high church curate "our correspondent" in the *Times* gave the public some praise, calling him "the plucky parson," he having continued to read the Sunday morning service after the bursting of a bomb-shell in his vicinity.

At this moment, when any one having peculiar views or pretensions to religious character was welcome to me, I made the acquaintance of several Roman Catholic priests. One of these, an amiable elderly Irishman who credited everything supernatural, was so simple-minded one could not help respecting him, especially as he accepted our listening to him as evincing on our part acceptance of his stories. One of these was this—in evidence of the necessity for keeping holy water in the house. One of the oldest and best sheep in his flock had just lately had a contention with the master of evil himself. He was sitting alone by the fire when the door was burst open by a great black dog that belonged to nobody, and stood stock-still showing its teeth. The good believer knew him at once, and groping on the chimney-piece found the bottle of holy water. Armed with this he was not afraid, but threw the contents over the dog. Unhappily there was next to nothing in the bottle, it had nearly dried up; there was only enough to make him give one howl and leave the apartment, but not the house. He was afterwards seen in the passage! The good man furnished himself with a fresh and large supply. The master of evil not being omniscient—as good

saints and angels must be—returned the following night, again bursting open the door ; but when he received a proper discharge of holy water in his face, he ran howling, not only out of the house, but out of the street, and has never been seen since. This good old man, Father Kelly, has gone to his rest lately. He was like Chaucer's good parson in many ways ; but he would have burned or been burned, he would have made a martyr or been a martyr, having been imprisoned for contempt of court, in refusing to give up the name of a thief confided to him in confession. It is said that the one half of the world does not know how the other half lives ; it is much more interesting to know what the other half thinks or believes.

Another priest we became very intimate with, because he liked our acceptance of his surprises and our manners to him. He was a convert of flaming enthusiasm, a gentleman—or very like one—who pretended he could not understand why I did not embrace the mediæval faith when I admired fourteenth-century architecture ! He lived on herrings and tea to enable him to keep a horse and dress in hessian boots, though his congregation was the refuse of the Irish, in one of the environs of the town—hewers of wood and drawers of water,—and his church a barn or malt-house, or something of that kind, dressed up, the altar being backed and screened by old carpets. The truth was, he would not remain under the authority of the superior at the Newcastle Roman Catholic Great Church ; so he got

permission to take possession of Gateshead as his parish, and endeavoured to get subscriptions to erect a church. But in the meantime he opened the barn, washed out in gaudy size-colours, and lived in the neighbourhood in a small street which the builder had called after his wife, "Catherine Street." This figured on Father Beetham's programme (he was fond of printing, though few of his flock could read) as the "Street named from Saint Catherine."

The contrast between Father Kelly and Beetham the English convert was amusing. With an affectation of learning, and vanity of all kinds—he claimed to be endowed by his conversion, not spiritually or morally, but intellectually—yet he would talk the wildest unreason on the polemical subjects then occupying attention! All converts are like that; even Newman has printed the statement that he shut out from his consideration the rationalistic point of view from the first. Any writer who can take that ground I look upon as out of court in argument, and harmless; but one who does not print, but who talks to people who do not read, is never harmless. One evening he had something to tell us that ought to make an impression: a miracle had happened to one of his people the evening before! A widow had come to the Sunday evening service with her little boy and twenty pounds—the accumulation of years, her total worldly possessions, with which she was about to take a small shop—in her pocket. The money was in a leather bag; when she rose to leave she found it gone. He set her on her knees, and

made her and her little boy repeat "Ave Marias" as loudly and quickly as possible for an hour ; then with a benediction he sent her home. They had not gone far when the boy running by her side stumbled against something—it was the leather bag ! I went to hear him preach on the perfections of the "Mother of God," and I actually heard him promise his listeners places in Paradise if they repeated "Ave Marias" daily. The beauty and other perfections of the Blessed Virgin, he could tell them from the Fathers, so modified the purposes of the Most High that He precipitated the work of redemption in order to make her the chosen vessel—the period pre-arranged in the Divine mind for the advent having been a century later, as S. Jerome had shown from the prophets. With or without S. Jerome this was an astounding speculation. He did not manage to build a church, became disgusted with his *parish*, and left the neighbourhood. The last we heard of him was that he had entered a Jesuits' college abroad, and was learning obedience as cook's assistant.

I shall give no more of the peculiar experiences coming within our knowledge, but shall record a few particulars of a Quakeress, our intimate friend for years, and dear friend still, the most pious, amiable, charitable, active, and humble-minded of all the generation. One great object which attached her to us was her extreme desire to benefit me, to influence me to become a better Christian than she saw I had hitherto been,—I mean both in belief and in the practice of good works. Although she was not

a person of wide reading, or extensive knowledge of the world, I could not but admire her childlike openness, her assiduity and patience. She perceived that I wanted rest for the soles of my feet, comparing me prettily to the dove that Noah sent out, but which never came back. She spoke of the benefit of prayer and of "communion with God" without perceiving that these phrases carried no possibilities except to those already within the pale of their influence. Anna Richardson's husband was too shy to tackle me, but he was just as childlike and excellent as Anna herself (we always used the Christian name only), so I always felt a little ashamed of my hard heart in meeting coldly Anna's earnest manner, till I seemed a hypocrite to myself. "When I think of my mother," she wrote me after a confidential conversation, "and remember the various times in circumstances of extreme distress under which I have seen her leave the family circle with a pale and almost agonised countenance, and return to it from her private retirement in half an hour bright and cheerful, it is difficult now, as it was then, to resist the imperative conviction that God had comforted her. No mental struggle, no mastery over nature's feelings, could possibly have effected the change." Another time she writes: "Why do I continue to talk to thee of those, my secret thoughts? I can only say it is sweet to obey the impulse. I think I am right to do so, and my husband says, 'Do what thee thinks right.' There is a text in the Bible which I never heard any one

quote, and which I even believe would make some excellent people look grave. It is this, 'To the man that is good in His sight God giveth wisdom and knowledge and joy.' It is the heartfelt breathing of my spirit that this blessing might descend upon many near and dear to me, and your names are among the number."

In this spirit she worked in all kinds of benevolent schemes, effecting wonders. It was in her power to collect any amount of money within a few weeks—I mean such as five hundred pounds or more, to be sent away at any crisis in American slavery affairs, or temperance. My little narrative poem *Rosabell (Mary Anne)* suggested to her a ladies' society to look after female prisoners, shelter them, and reinstate them in decent life. She walked for a few days in the air, and at the end had a Home with a matron and everything in order. We found the majority of the female peace-breakers in that thickly-populated town were Scotch, a fact difficult to explain. They were very hard to deal with, and their former families and friends more difficult still. There was something in their laughter and in their attempted enjoyments absolutely brutal. The few who were not so bad were extrememly difficult to understand. I remembered at a former time being struck by the lowness of the type among about a hundred young men in a criminal reformatory in Hull, and I began to think the abandoned or so-called unfortunate class of women she tried to deal with were similarly mentally weak or

diseased. The old women had a fixed idea of escaping with the blankets, and the young ones of getting out of sight of their betters, however well disposed to them.

One girl expressed herself ready to go home to Dundee, and Anna Richardson wrote to her father, whose name the daughter very unwillingly gave up. His answer to Anna was good, but to his daughter stern.

"One word to Ellen. My daughter Ellen, it was with pain I heard of your disgraceful and shameful life for so long a time. It has now pleased God to put a stop to your mad career. What is your mind now? Are you resolved in the strength of God's grace to go and sin no more, or will you fly in God's face and grieve His holy spirit by resisting His operation in your soul? Will you grieve the heart of that amiable lady who has been so kind to you—will you bring your father's gray hairs with sorrow to the grave? I charge you for your soul's salvation to consider your latter end. Oh, who knows what the damned suffer in hell; who can dwell with devouring flames, who can dwell with everlasting burning? Flee for refuge to Him ever ready as it were with spread-forth arms. Be concerned about this,—what must I do to be saved? . . . May the Lord in his mercy send these things home to your heart.

Should this letter be delivered to the girl? Her father's letter must be given her, yet was there no welcome back in it, nor any arrangement about her future way of life. The girl was furnished with money for the journey; in tears she left perhaps the first and only amiable Christian friend she had ever had; but she never returned to her father.

Several years after the period of our greatest

intimacy with our dear friend, she fell on the ice walking hurriedly with her inseparable bag of letters in her hand, and thinking nothing about herself, and was laid up for many weeks. When recovered I went to see her. She observed me from the window, was at the door before I reached it, and keeping my hand as we walked to the drawing-room, asked if I would like to hear what at that moment occupied her thoughts. It had always seemed to her that great changes, that of death especially, were foreshadowed in the mind (I mentally agreed with her, thinking, however, it was the condition of the body that brought the shadow). She had felt as if our Preserver gave warning to some that their end was approaching. Such a consciousness had been pressed upon her mind. She looked forward with joy, and during these weeks of confinement she had drawn together and arranged as many of her charitable schemes as she could, so that others might find no difficulty with them. Not that her call would come suddenly yet ; she knew there was no certainty in such impressions. What concerned her most was how her husband would be supported. She had refrained from mentioning this presentiment to him, though she had spoken of it to several among the dearest of her friends.

I left her much impressed and interested: She reappeared at the drawing-room door as I descended the stair to give me some snowdrops, the first of the year I had seen. In her case the prayerful

